

INSPECTION REPORT

BROADWAY SCHOOL

Perry Barr, Birmingham

LEA area: Birmingham

Unique reference number: 103511

Headteacher: Mr M.H. Emm

Lead inspector: Mr D. Driscoll

Dates of inspection: 10th – 13th November 2003

Inspection number: 259248

Inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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Terms used in this report

*Students in Years 7, 8 and 9 are at **Key Stage 3**, having transferred in most cases from their primary schools **after** Year 6. Students in Years 10 and 11 are at **Key Stage 4** of their education. Those students who remain at school after the compulsory period of education are in the **sixth form**, in Years 12 and 13. Students in Years 7 to 11 follow courses and Programmes of Study set out in the National Curriculum. A course of religious education is a requirement for students and students of all ages at school.*

*At the end of Year 9, students aged 14 take national tests in English, mathematics and science. In all subjects of the National Curriculum, teachers also make their own assessments of what the students know, understand and can do at age 14. At the end of Year 11, students aged 16 may take examinations in the General Certificate of Secondary Education (**GCSE**). Others may follow courses leading to the award of the General National Vocational Qualification (**GNVQ**) or the National Vocational Qualification (**NVQ**). Sixth form students may take further courses leading to these awards, including the Advanced Vocational Certificate of Education (**AVCE**), or to those of the General Certificate of Education at Advanced level (**A-level**): following AS level students may go on to study for the full A-level this is usually referred to as **A2**. Students may take examinations leading to the Advanced Subsidiary award (**AS**), equivalent to half the difficulty of the full A-level, which is gained by further study beyond AS standard. Some students may also take Advanced Extension Awards (**AEA**).*

Inspectors judge the standards reached by students by comparing their attainments with national test and examination results, or by the levels of performance expected for students of the same age nationally. The students' achievements reflect whether they are doing well enough. These judgements take account of the educational value added over time. In this report, similar schools are defined as those having similar standards at the start of each stage of learning.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Comprehensive
School category: Community
Age range of students: 11 – 18
Gender of students: Mixed
Number on roll: 1395

School address: Broadway School
The Broadway
Perry Barr
Birmingham

Postcode: B20 3DP

Telephone number: 0121 464 8834

Fax number: 0121 464 1122

Appropriate authority: Governing body

Name of chair of governors: Miss J. Stock

Date of previous inspection: 11th May 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Broadway School is a larger than average mixed comprehensive school, with many more boys than girls in most year groups. The majority of students are of Asian origin, with most coming from Pakistani or Bangladeshi backgrounds. Nevertheless, there are representatives of very many different ethnic backgrounds at the school. There are relatively large numbers of refugees and asylum seekers at the school. On average, one in five students join or leave the school each year at times other than the start of Year 7 – a very high proportion that leads to over half the current school population not having been at the school from the start of Year 7. The proportion of students whose mother tongue is not English is much higher than in most other schools and there is a sizeable group of students who are at the early stages of learning English.

Standards of attainment on entry to the school are very low; results from the end of Year 6 are in the bottom five per cent nationally. Standards in English are exceptionally low. The proportion of students with special educational needs is average, but the proportion with a statement is below average. Most students are on the register for social, emotional and behavioural difficulties or moderate learning difficulties, but there are also those with visual and hearing problems. Standards on entry to the sixth form are very low; most students follow level 2 courses such as GCSEs and intermediate GNVQs, although some follow level 1 courses (pre-GCSE) and others study for A-levels.

The school is situated on two sites in an area of extreme deprivation, and socio-economic circumstances are very low. The school is part of the 'Excellence in Cities' project. The school has difficulties in recruiting suitably qualified staff. The characteristics of the students joining the school have changed very significantly from the time of the last inspection; many more now join with little or no English. Many students stay in the sixth form for three or four years in order to gain qualifications.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
11933	D. Driscoll	Lead inspector	
9086	R. Watkins	Lay inspector	
33139	M. Wilson	Team inspector	Mathematics
19596	B. Treacy	Team inspector	English
30825	K. Hayton	Team inspector	Science; Chemistry
10297	D. Cox	Team inspector	Design and technology; Information and communication technology in the sixth form
17868	E. Metcalfe	Team inspector	Art and design
31705	J. Mason	Team inspector	Music
15832	J. Vanstone	Team inspector	History
15462	C. Blakemore	Team inspector	Geography; Business education
3793	J. Peach	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages
27485	M. Sims	Team inspector	Community languages
15208	A. Briggs	Team inspector	Information and communication technology (ICT)
12985	S. Jeffray	Team inspector	Physical education
30427	F. Shuffle-Botham	Team inspector	Religious education
2597	C. Jackson	Team inspector	Sociology; Health and social care
11720	P. Winch	Team inspector	Special educational needs
12825	N. Carr	Team inspector	Psychology; Law; English as an additional language
22590	R. Castle	Team inspector	Citizenship

The inspection contractor was:

Independent School Inspection Services (ISIS)

3 Harrowby Road
West Park
Leeds
LS16 5HN

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

The school provides a **satisfactory** standard of education; teaching and achievement are satisfactory. Nevertheless, the school costs much more than average and so provides **unsatisfactory** value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Students achieve well in Years 7 to 9 as a result of the very good work to improve their language and literacy skills, but this work does not continue in later years to the same extent.
- The school provides a safe haven and good pastoral care where students of all capabilities can learn.
- Students achieve very well in French, but underachieve in art and design and ICT.
- The curriculum is unsatisfactory.
- Links with parents and the community are unsatisfactory.
- The guidance provided for some sixth form students is unsatisfactory.
- The school has made good progress as a result of the headteacher's good leadership, but leadership of the sixth form is unsatisfactory.

Improvement since the last inspection has been **good**. Attendance has improved significantly and exclusions have fallen. Teaching is better and students are no longer underachieving in as many subjects. Good progress has been made on most of the key issues from the previous inspection, especially attendance and literacy, but some statutory requirements are still not met and art and design remains a weakness.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Performance compared with:		all schools			similar schools
		2000	2001	2002	2002
Year 11	GCSE/GNVQ examinations	E	E	E	C
Year 13	A/AS-level and VCE examinations	N/A	D	D	

*Key: A - well above average; B - above average; C - average; D - below average; E - well below average
For Year 11, similar schools are those whose students attained similarly at the end of Year 9.*

Achievement is satisfactory. Standards are well below average at the end of Year 9 and Year 11. Students achieve well in Years 7 to 9 as a result of the very good work to improve their language and literacy skills. Achievement in Years 10 and 11 is satisfactory. Students who are at an early stage of learning English achieve very well in all years; gifted and talented students do well. Achievement in the sixth form is satisfactory. Students on level 1, vocational or A-level courses do well, but many on GCSE courses do only as well as expected and many do not have the standards required to start the course with any hope of success.

Students' personal development and their overall spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are good. Students' attitudes and behaviour are good and their attendance is average. Students in the sixth form have good attitudes and satisfactory attendance.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The school provides a satisfactory quality of education. Teaching is satisfactory and leads to satisfactory learning. The best teaching in the main school is in French, where it is very good, while teaching in art and design is unsatisfactory. In the sixth form, the best teaching is in health and social care, where it is very good.

The curriculum is unsatisfactory. Good attention is given to the care and welfare of students, but links with parents are unsatisfactory. In the sixth form, good attention is given to students' welfare, but the guidance they receive on which courses to follow is unsatisfactory.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headteacher provides good leadership, as do many middle managers, but there are weaknesses in the leadership and management of the curriculum and in the leadership of the sixth form. Governors are doing a good job, but fail to meet their statutory responsibilities.

PARENTS' AND STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Comments are based on those students and parents who responded to the questionnaires or attended the parents' meeting. Parents and students alike are generally happy with the education the school provides. There were few areas of real strength or weakness mentioned, other than the need to improve links with parents and the community.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

The most important things the school should do to improve are:

- Improve the quality of teaching in art and design.
- Ensure all students in Years 10 and 11 are taught the National Curriculum in ICT.
- Give greater thought to planning a curriculum that prepares students in Years 10 and 11 for courses in the sixth form.
- Extend the very good work on literacy to Years 10 and 11.
- Improve the links with parents and the local community.

In the sixth form:

- Ensure someone has responsibility for leading the sixth form and raising standards.
- Ensure students are on appropriate courses for their qualifications.

To meet statutory requirements:

- Ensure students have their full curriculum entitlement in ICT and religious education; provide reports to parents on their child's progress in citizenship and provide a daily act of collective worship.

OVERALL EVALUATION

The sixth form provides a satisfactory education and its cost-effectiveness is **satisfactory**. Teaching and achievement are satisfactory and the sixth form operates within its budget. Management is satisfactory, but leadership is unsatisfactory.

The main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The guidance students receive is unsatisfactory, so some end up following unsuitable courses.
- Leadership is unsatisfactory.
- Students achieve very well in health and social care as a result of very good teaching.
- Pastoral care is good.

QUALITY AND STANDARDS IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES OF THE CURRICULUM

Judgements about the provision in the subjects and courses inspected in the sixth form are shown below. They are based mainly on the quality of teaching and learning and how well students achieve. Not all subjects in the sixth form were inspected.

Curriculum area	Evaluation
English, languages and communication	Satisfactory . Provision for A-level and GCSE is satisfactory. Teachers know their subject well, but too little work is set for the GCSE groups.
Mathematics	Satisfactory . Provision for A-level is good, but for the GCSE groups is satisfactory. Teachers provide good support for students, but those on the GCSE course find it hard to adjust to the new requirements.
Science	Provision in chemistry is satisfactory . Lessons are planned well, but nobody has overall responsibility for the subject.
Information and communication technology	Good . Teaching is good, but many students start courses with little or no background in the subject.
Humanities	Provision in history is good . Teaching is good, but insufficiently focused on improving literacy skills. Provision in law is satisfactory . Lessons are planned well, but students do not have the necessary skills to follow the GCSE course successfully. Provision in psychology is good . Resources are good, but students are held back by their weak writing skills. Provision in religious education is satisfactory . Teachers have a good knowledge of the subject, but students are too dependent on their teachers. Provision in sociology is satisfactory . Teacher use a good variety of methods, but students are held back by their weak writing skills.
Visual and performing arts and media	Provision in art is satisfactory . Teachers know the subject well, but the time-tabling of lessons is leading to underachievement.
Business	Provision in business education is good . Students achieve well as a result of good teaching.
Health and social care	Provision in health and social care is very good . Students achieve very well as a result of very good teaching.

The curriculum areas are broadly common across all post-16 education and training. They do not necessarily correspond with subjects and courses taught by the school. Inspectors make judgements in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor. Excellent and very good are equivalent to the judgement 'outstanding' in further education and sixth form college reports; poor and very poor are equivalent to 'very weak'.

ADVICE, GUIDANCE AND SUPPORT

Good attention is given to students' welfare, but guidance for students is unsatisfactory, so many are studying for GCSE examinations with little chance of success.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT OF THE SIXTH FORM

Management is satisfactory, but leadership is unsatisfactory, because no one has responsibility for ensuring standards are driven up.

STUDENTS' VIEWS OF THE SIXTH FORM

Students in the sixth form are happy at the school and have no real complaints about their education.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY STUDENTS

Standards achieved in subjects and courses

Students join the school with standards of attainment that are very low; they achieve well in Years 7 to 9 so standards improve to a level that is well below average by the end of Year 9. Standards remain well below average by the end of Year 11 and students' achievement is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students in Years 7 to 11 achieve very well in French because of the very good teaching they receive.
- Students underachieve in art and design in Years 7 to 11 as a result of unsatisfactory teaching.
- Students make very good progress in their literacy skills in Years 7 to 9.
- Students who are at an early stage of learning the English language are quickly integrated into the main school and achieve very well.
- Students underachieve in ICT in Years 10 and 11, as a result of an inadequate curriculum.

Commentary

1. By the end of Year 9, standards are well below average. Nevertheless, this is good achievement for students whose standards on entry to the school were very low and whose results in tests at the end of Year 6 were in the bottom five per cent of all schools nationally. Most students speak English as an additional language, and their results in English from Year 6 are very low indeed. The main reason that students achieve well is the way that the school concentrates on improving students' reading, writing, speaking and listening. Not only does the school have a very effective way of using the national strategy for improving these skills, but it also employs other means, such as bombarding students with the English language at lunchtime by the amazing displays in the main hall. By improving these skills, students are able to learn much better in the other subjects that they study. The school also admits many students who are new to the country and speak very little English indeed; these students are catered for very well. Such students are taught in separate groups to begin with, but owing to the very good progress they make, they are quickly integrated into mainstream lessons. The practice of using their language lessons as a medium for teaching the other subjects of the National Curriculum is particularly effective in ensuring they catch up in these other subjects.
2. While students in Years 10 and 11 who speak little English continue to receive the same very good support as earlier years, other students with English as an additional language are not so well catered for. The work that the school carries out on improving literacy does not continue to the same extent in Years 10 and 11, so students' achievement is only satisfactory in most subjects as they are held back, by their poor writing in particular. This is most evident when observing the difference between students' spoken and written explanations; they understand what they have learnt, can just about explain it orally, but really struggle to write answers to examination questions. The students in Years 10 and 11 did not receive the same teaching of literacy skills that is now taking place lower down the school.

3. Students' achievement is best in French. Here, the very good teaching ensures students make rapid gains in the language, so that standards are average by the end of Year 9 and above average by the end of Year 11. This is a remarkable turnaround from the situation at the time of the previous inspection when students were underachieving. On the other hand, students continue to underachieve in art and design as a result of unsatisfactory teaching. The situation in ICT, in Years 10 and 11, is slightly different, in that students who are taught the subject achieve well, but many underachieve because they do not receive any lessons in ICT and do not make enough use of computers in other subjects to make up for this deficit.
4. The achievement of students with special educational needs is satisfactory overall; in Years 7 to 9 it is good. Students achieve well as a result of lessons taught by specialist staff or in lessons where learning support assistants are present; this is much more likely to occur in Years 7 to 9, where the specialist support is concentrated. Achievement in reading and spelling is good because of the emphasis placed on literacy. Students who are particularly gifted and talented do well in all years because of the special provision that is made for them; their GCSE results show they achieve better than other students.

Standards in national tests at the end of Year 9 – average point scores in 2003

Standards in:	School results	National results
English	28.1 (27.3)	33.3 (33.3)
Mathematics	30.7 (30.4)	35.3 (34.7)
Science	28.5 (27.7)	33.7 (33.3)

There were 213 students in the year group. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

Standards in GCSE/GNVQ examinations at the end of Year 11 in 2002

	School results	National results
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-C grades	26 (23)	50 (48)
Percentage of students gaining 5 or more A*-G grades	73 (88)	91 (91)
Percentage of students gaining 1 or more A*-G grades	92 (95)	96 (96)
Average point score per student (best eight subjects)	25.6	34.6

There were 223 students in the year group. The percentages include the equivalent GCSE grades obtained in GNVQ assessments. Figures in brackets are for the previous year.

5. Results in the national tests at the end of Year 9 in 2003 were very low in English and well below average in mathematics and science. Nevertheless, students achieved well in each of these subjects given their standards on joining the school. Results in the 2002 GCSE examinations were well below average, but improved in 2003. Students did as well as expected in 2002 given their standards on starting their examination courses. Results in the national tests and GCSEs have improved, but at a slower rate than that found nationally, because the school now has many more students joining the school who do not speak English at all, or whose language skills are particularly weak. Students from a Pakistani background tend to get poorer results at GCSE than other students, but the school does not analyse achievement in sufficient detail to be able to tell if this is a result of worse achievement or if they started with lower standards in the first place.

6. Achievement is much better than that at the time of the previous inspection when students were underachieving in several subjects.

Sixth form

Overall, students' achievement is satisfactory. Standards on entry to the sixth form are very low. Students on A-level or vocational courses, and those on level 1 courses (pre-GCSE), achieve well, but achievement for those on GCSE courses is only satisfactory and many do as well as expected, but are on the wrong courses in the first place.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve well on A-level and vocational courses.
- Many students on the GCSE courses do as well as expected, but do not have the standards necessary to start the course.
- Students achieve very well in health and social care.

Commentary

7. Results in the 2002 A-level examinations were below average. Results for males were average and for females were well below average, a complete reversal of the situation in the previous year. Results fluctuate from year to year, depending on the capabilities of the students joining the sixth form. Results in vocational examinations were above average. On both A-level and vocational courses, students achieve well given their GCSE results on joining the sixth form. Other students, particularly those with difficulty with the English language, follow a pre-GCSE course and do well, so that they are able to study for GCSEs the following year.
8. There are, however, many students who study for GCSEs in order to improve their grades or to study new subjects. Whereas some are successful in improving their grades, others are not and some actually obtain worse grades than they did on the first occasion they sat the examination. Some students take up new subjects, such as law, to which they are unsuited because their writing is not good enough, or art where they have insufficient background to complete a two-year course in only two terms. Given their standards on starting these courses, the students achieve as well as could be expected, but they were ill advised to start the course in the first place with such low standards.

Standards in GCE A/AS-level and VCE examinations at the end of Year 13 in 2002

	School results	National results
Percentage of entries gaining A-E grades	98.6	94.8
Percentage of entries gaining A-B grades	16.2	39.4
Average point score per student	201.1	263.3

There were 29 students in the year group.

9. Students achieve very well in health and social care as a result of the very good teaching.
10. It is not appropriate to compare standards with the previous inspection, as the nature of the sixth form is now completely different.

Students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Students' attitudes to learning and their behaviour are good. Punctuality is good and attendance is satisfactory. Steps to promote students' understanding and respect for spiritual and cultural values are good. Students' social development is also good, while their moral development is very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses in the main school

- Students learn to respect each other's cultures and beliefs and live together as a friendly community, because of the way the school supports their personal development.
- Students mostly behave well and work hard.
- The number of exclusions is falling.
- Attendance and punctuality are both better now than at the previous inspection though a number of students still miss school far too often.

Commentary

11. Students show good attitudes in many lessons; they respond well to really good teaching. Girls usually work quietly and sensibly. Boys are generally capable of concentrating just as well and indeed are often more confident to give spoken answers. However, some groups of boys take work too lightly. When the teacher targets questions carefully, as often happens in French, girls and boys participate equally. Both boys and girls are very keen to join in physical education lessons, so that it is rare for any student to forget their kit.
12. Students from different ethnic traditions work together well in pairs or groups when teachers demand it, as for instance often happens in ICT and design and technology. There is room to organise more such opportunities for sharing ideas and efforts. When left to organise themselves in lessons students are all amicable towards each other but often naturally gravitate towards those of their own ethnic group. Bullying and racism seldom arise. Any tensions that arise outside the school are rarely reflected within it.
13. A few students, mostly boys, sometimes lapse into silly immature behaviour. When this happens it disturbs the vast majority, who have a clear grasp of the right way to behave and who generally want to get on with their work. Usually individuals who misbehave improve when they are moved from their class to work under the supervision of a senior member of staff. Occasionally the attention and behaviour of a whole class become unsatisfactory. This is usually because the activity is not right for them or because the teacher does not follow the school's guidelines for managing behaviour.
14. Incidents of really poor behaviour arise from time to time and these are spread unevenly between different ethnic groups of students. In 2002-2003, for instance, Indian students received fixed term exclusions for poor behaviour much less often than students did from the two other main ethnic groups in the school. The school is aiming to reduce time lost from lessons through exclusion; exclusions fell considerably across all ethnic groups during the two months leading up to the inspection. This has been achieved because students who behave badly are now often sent to work in the new alternative curriculum centre instead of being sent home.

*Ethnic background of students**Exclusions in the last school year*

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of students on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	13		
White – Irish	0		
White – any other White background	6		
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	4		
Mixed – White and Black African	1		
Mixed – White and Asian	5	1	
Mixed – any other mixed background	2		
Asian or Asian British – Indian	143	3	
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	443	48	1
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	402	30	1
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	28	1	
Black or Black British – Caribbean	29	5	
Black or Black British – African	2		
Black or Black British – any other Black background	4		
Chinese	5		
Any other ethnic group	146	4	
No ethnic group recorded	6		

The table gives the number of exclusions, which may be different from the number of students excluded.

15. Provision for students' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is good. Almost half the students study religious education to GCSE and they respond very positively to the good opportunities to reflect on their beliefs and values. The responses of students towards Ramadan and those who follow the religious observances illustrate their respect for the beliefs of others. In many lessons teachers encourage students to reflect on their feelings. For instance, Year 11 in drama deepened their understanding by reflecting on the difference between wishing and prayer, personal aspiration and religious belief. Opportunities for social development are best in Years 7 and 8. These students take responsibility as 'big friends' to other pupils and receptionists and through their forum contribute sensible ideas for improving the school environment. A residential visit to an outdoor education centre provides an excellent opportunity for them to develop team-building skills and increases their confidence and self-esteem. Students in Years 9 to 11, however, have few planned opportunities to develop leadership qualities. Where students are encouraged to mix outside their established friendship groups, as in the preparation for the Year 8 Christmas production, they learn to appreciate the qualities and friendship of others from more diverse backgrounds. Assemblies generally provide moral guidance and encouragement to study. The 'Eid' party where students invited their friends is a good example of sharing celebrations across the cultures. Students are enthusiastic about some of the extra activities organised, such as the

lunchtime girls' club that gives girls social opportunities as well as offering interesting activities.

Attendance

16. Some students hardly ever miss school apart from acceptable absences for religious observance and many students show at least satisfactory attendance. However, attendance during the inspection was lower than usual as it took place during Ramadan. The school's good efforts in liaison with the education welfare service help to maintain attendance levels and staff are working hard towards further improvement. A minority of students have poor attendance, especially in lower ability groups and in the older age groups. Staff find that Bangladeshi boys tend to miss school more often than other students. At some times of year absences for family holidays interrupt learning, particularly in the run-up to national tests at the end of Year 9. Punctuality is good because the recent strict application of sanctions for lateness has prompted most students to come to school on time.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (2001-2002) (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	7.8	School data	0.9
National data	7.8	National data	1.2

The table gives the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.

Sixth form

Students' behaviour is very good and their attitudes are good. Their personal development is also good. Attendance is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students are mostly keen to learn and this contributes to their progress.
- Students make a good contribution to the functioning of the school through the jobs they take on.

Commentary

17. Students show good attitudes and work willingly in many lessons. For instance, in health and social care they show great interest and are very confident when answering questions, because they know their efforts will be respected. Even when teaching is less captivating, students remain co-operative and willing to work and this helps their progress. They lose interest though if a lesson is unchallenging and does not help them learn anything new. At such times they are well behaved but passive, with little sign of any initiative or self-reliance in note taking.
18. Provision for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of students in the sixth form is good. The lack of religious education reduces opportunities to develop their beliefs; however, opportunities for students to reflect in lessons and in the prayer room are available. Students in the sixth form mostly respond well to their good opportunities for personal development. Through paid and voluntary work they provide good support for the younger students as well as

gaining valuable experience of responsibility. Similarly, through paired reading schemes and through support for sports clubs and teams, they are developing leadership qualities. Although students have been trained as peer mentors there is no organised opportunity for them to use their skills. There is no overview of which students take part in the opportunities offered and as a result the potential of some groups of students is not developed. The sixth form organise themselves to run charity fundraising events such as the very successful ‘slave auction’. The students who are prompted to get involved with the Young People’s Parliament display confidence and willingness to be involved in the community at large.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

Teaching and learning

Overall, teaching in Years 7 to 11 is satisfactory and leads to satisfactory learning. The quality of assessment of students’ work is satisfactory. Teaching is better than at the time of the previous inspection.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers emphasise improving language and literacy skills in Years 7 to 9, which leads to students achieving well.
- Teaching of students who are at the early stages of learning English is very good.
- Teaching is very good in French, but unsatisfactory in art and design.
- Teachers are not challenging students’ reticence to work in different groups sufficiently.
- Teachers are good at managing behaviour.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 217 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
5 (2%)	46 (21%)	84 (39%)	69 (32%)	11 (5%)	2 (1%)	0

The table gives the number of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons; figures in brackets show percentages where 30 or more lessons are seen.

Commentary

19. One of the two areas of real strength in the teaching is the way that teachers of Year 7 to Year 9 students consistently emphasise the development of language and literacy skills. Almost every classroom has displays of key words that are required for the subject, but these are not just there to decorate the walls. Teachers refer to them at the start of lessons and make a particular point of writing them on the board, so students know which ones will be used during the lesson. Teachers are quick to correct pronunciation or ask for more appropriate vocabulary. In this way, students make good gains in their language and literacy skills, which enable them to achieve well and make better progress in all subjects because they can communicate better. This work is considerably better in Years 7 to 9 than other years, because the same strategies are not yet being employed further up the school.
20. The other strength in the teaching is the control of behaviour. There is very little disruption to teaching, and parents agree that their children enjoy school. Good behaviour is common in

lessons, partly as a result of the students' good attitudes to learning, but also because teachers' control is such that the simple raising of eyebrows is enough to quieten any student who does start to misbehave.

21. There are, however, several areas of teaching that, despite being satisfactory, could be much better. Some lessons are a bit boring, particularly when students have to spend long periods listening to the teacher. In many lessons the demands made of students are appropriate, but could be that little bit higher for the middle attaining students. In French, where the teaching is the best in the school, students learn very well because the work is so demanding. In art and design, on the other hand, students are often left to flounder, not knowing what they are supposed to do or how to do it. In most lessons, students work in single sex groups based on their ethnic background. Where teachers encourage them to work in mixed groups, such as in design and technology and ICT, students do so willingly; but such practice is not widespread in the school.
22. The teaching and learning of students with special educational needs are good, where lessons are taught by specialist staff. Teachers know how to help students learn. They break down the work into a variety of different tasks and this enables students to keep concentrating. Great emphasis is placed on basic skills. For example, science lessons for younger students begin with a spelling test, and in history the lessons start with a focus on key words related to the topic. This helps students to improve reading and writing. Learning support assistants make a valuable contribution to students' personal as well as academic development. In unsupported classes of students with learning difficulties, progress is slower.
23. Sometimes, all the really good elements of teaching come together in a single lesson; this happens most frequently in the lessons for students who are at an early stage of learning English. In one lesson on the history of medicine, for example, students were presented with a collection of 'urine' samples and asked to diagnose illnesses. Like most children, they were at the same time disgusted and fascinated; but things were about to get worse. "Look at this one", the teacher said, holding the sample against the whiteboard so students could see the colour. "This one is from a patient with diabetes. You can tell this from the taste". And with that, the teacher dipped his finger into the sample and tasted it. No student is ever going to forget that lesson and all were really fired up to go on to learn more. (The 'urine' samples were, of course, not real urine).

Sixth form

Teaching in the sixth form is satisfactory and brings about satisfactory learning. Procedures and use of assessment are satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is very good in health and social care.
- The learning is not as good as the teaching in subjects where a good standard of literacy is required.

Commentary

24. Students are keen to learn in the sixth form, but many are on courses that require good standards of reading and writing, which the students do not possess. So, in subjects such as law and sociology the students are taught well by teachers who have a good knowledge of the subject, but students' learning is only satisfactory because they are unable to explain ideas either orally or in writing, in enough detail. Some lessons are presented in interesting ways, but in others the teacher expects the students to be passive so the students' concentration starts to wane. This is never the case in health and social care, where teachers plan the work to meet the needs of individual students, rather than aiming work at the whole group. Students who are at the early stages of learning English continue to receive the same very good level of support as in the main school.

The curriculum

The curriculum is good in Years 7 to 9 but unsatisfactory in Years 10 to 13. The curriculum is not planned so as to provide continuity for students from the age of 14 through to the age of 19. The school does not provide a statutory daily act of collective worship. Staffing, resources and accommodation are all satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The very good programmes for improving literacy and support for students for whom English is an additional language are helping to improve standards of reading, writing and speaking.
- The good curriculum in Year 7 to 9 enables students to achieve well.
- The curriculum in Years 10 and 11 does not meet statutory requirements for ICT.
- There are not enough courses that meet the needs of students with special educational needs.

Commentary

25. In Years 7 to 9, all students follow the subjects of the National Curriculum. In addition, students follow a course in drama, which helps to promote students' self-esteem. One strength of the curriculum is the way students are allocated to one of four tutor groups on joining the school. For example, there is the 'catch-up' group, which targets those students that failed to attain a Level 4 in the national tests at age 11. Another group is for students who are higher attainers. Through these groupings, the school is able to focus its resources towards students' specific needs and, as a result, students achieve well. The school has made good progress in developing its provision for improving students' literacy skills; this was an area of concern noted in the previous report. The large number of students who speak some English, but still struggle with writing in particular, gain the most benefit from this aspect of the school's provision and this is one of the main reasons why students achieve well in Years 7 to 9.
26. The very good literacy strategy introduced lower down the school has not been followed through into Years 10 and 11 to the same extent. As a result, students struggle with the written aspects of their coursework, thus restricting their achievement. This year, a vocational science course has been introduced for some Year 10 students, which is better suited to their needs, but not all students have access to the National Curriculum for ICT, and therefore underachieve. The curriculum provision is worse than at the time of the previous inspection.

27. Provision for students who are at the early stages of learning English is very good. Many students use a language other than English at home and a very large number are newly arrived from abroad. These students are supported by the Language Development Base to aid their integration into the school; several students receive one-to-one tuition. The emphasis is two-fold. First, students are taught to read and second to comprehend. Understanding does follow as students are immersed in the English language. After a year most students have a reading age of approximately 10 years. Students respond well to the support and attention that are provided. Extensive opportunities for reading in class, reading aloud and writing are promoted. As a result many students write and read competently. They are quickly reintegrated into the main school as a result of their English lessons being used as a medium to teach them the other subjects of the National Curriculum as well.
28. Overall, the school makes satisfactory provision for its students with special educational needs. In Years 7 to 9, provision is good because learning support teachers often take classes of students with learning difficulties and work matches students' needs closely. There are good arrangements in all years to assist students with reading difficulties, before school each day. However, the curriculum for Years 10 and 11 lacks a sufficient variety of courses to suit students with special needs. The quality of learning support assistants is high, but there are too few of them to support the curriculum effectively, and this restricts learning. There are good individual and group education plans which focus clearly on what students need to do to improve.
29. The school has made good use of the Excellence in Cities initiative to provide special events for gifted and talented students; they achieve well in all years as a result.

Sixth form

Main strength and weaknesses

- The curriculum is not planned so as to provide continuity for all students from the age of 14 through to the age of 19.
- Some students are ill-prepared for the rigours of sixth form study and, as a consequence, underachieve.
- There is only a limited enrichment programme.
- Lower attaining students and those who have difficulty with the English language are catered for well.
- Not all students receive their entitlement to religious education.

Commentary

30. Many students opt to stay on into the sixth form without any real idea of why they are doing so. Some stay on for social reasons; many others choose to retake their GCSE examinations. Whilst staying on to retake examinations is appropriate for some students, many improve only marginally on what they attained previously while others actually go backwards. There are students who study courses for which they are ill-prepared. For example, last year, very few students who chose to study ICT to A-level had gained an ICT qualification previously but were still allowed to start the course. This led to a significant number of students failing to complete the course. A number of students follow a compulsory course of study in art because

there is no other course for them to do; this is a waste of time for these students, many of whom do not want to be on the course in the first place. There is no core programme of enrichment; not all students have access to ICT or physical education. Not all students in the sixth form follow a programme of religious education, which is a breach of statutory requirements.

31. A strength of the sixth form is the 'skills for work and progression' programme which is for the lowest attaining students who wish to continue with their studies. This programme includes a wide range of subjects such as mathematics, English, ICT and science. A number of these students then go on to attain GCSEs and GNVQs. Similarly, those students for whom English is an additional language continue to receive the same very good support available to those lower down the school and, after following a course successfully in Year 12, can progress to another one-year course in Year 13.
32. The curriculum is of a worse standard than at the time of the previous inspection.

Care, guidance and support

Main school

The school gives good attention to the care, guidance and welfare of students. It takes satisfactory account of students' views.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students from many ethnic backgrounds and with diverse needs all feel cared for and secure within calm, orderly and friendly surroundings.
- Guidance to help students to be effective learners is good.
- Older students do not have the same chances to influence the running of the school as younger ones.

Commentary

33. The expectations, efforts and example of staff all combine to make the school a welcoming haven for all its students. Good attention is given to meeting their diverse needs. Support for students' personal development has improved since the previous inspection. For instance, students now benefit from a weekly target-setting routine. They decide a personal target, record it in their planner, and after a week consider how they have done. Other guidance caters for individual circumstances. For example, the good guidance on relationships within the health education programme is especially geared to the beliefs and needs of Moslem girls. New government initiatives, the Behaviour Improvement Programme [BIP] and Leadership Incentive Grant [LiG], are being used to revitalise the way the school supports students with poor behaviour. For instance, these initiatives have enabled the school to open a new alternative curriculum centre that is already beginning to help individuals to behave better. The BIP initiative also includes good liaison with support agencies to help families of students with ongoing behavioural or attendance problems.
34. Students appreciate the good support they get from their teachers. Subject teachers mostly give students a good understanding of the standards they are reaching and they show them how to do even better. However, no one pulls together information from different subjects to give students guidance based on an overall picture of how they are doing. The team who support students with special educational needs show considerable care for the well-being of the students they help, as well as giving good support for their learning. Similarly, support is very good for those who join the school while still in the early stages of learning English or with low literacy skills. There is room to improve access to counselling

for those who face other personal difficulties. Learning mentors are appointed but various factors, including the way that too much of one mentor's time is taken up with managing a library, reduce their availability to students. A local shortage of Connexions advisers detracts from the quality of careers' guidance.

35. The school uses questionnaires to gather students' views from time to time. Worry boxes are available for them to post notes about any concerns. In addition students on the Aston campus have form representatives. They know that through these representatives they can suggest ideas for improving their life in school and that staff will take them seriously. Older ones, on the Parry Barr campus, are generally confident that staff will listen to their ideas but do not have formal arrangements to ensure they all have opportunities for suggesting and discussing ideas.

Sixth form

Good attention is given to students' welfare and personal guidance. Students have satisfactory opportunities to express their views about aspects of school life. Educational guidance is unsatisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students on courses at all levels value the friendly caring atmosphere that continues from the main school into the sixth form.
- Guidance is unsatisfactory for many students who enrol on GCSE courses when they join the sixth form.

Commentary

36. The friendly atmosphere for learning seen in the main school is also very evident in the sixth form. Pastoral care is good; for instance expectations of good attendance are upheld. Teachers help students to increase their sense of personal responsibility for their work. At the same time students are confident that if they want extra help from their teachers or form tutor they only have to ask. They appreciate the new target-setting routine and the one-to-one discussions with their tutor, to check how they are doing. All this contributes to good support and guidance for students with regard to AS and A-level courses and vocational courses.
37. Guidance is unsatisfactory, however, regarding other courses offered to students. Large numbers of lower achieving students opt to join the sixth form because they want to continue in an environment they know and enjoy. When they enrol many are encouraged to repeat GCSE courses in hopes of improving the grades they attained in Year 11. For a minority this works out well and it provides a route to studies at a higher level. However, for many the advice to re-sit GCSEs turns out to be worthless as they do not manage to improve their results at all.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

Main school

Partnership with parents and with the community is unsatisfactory. Links with other schools are satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses in the main school

- Parents often know little about teachers' hopes and aims for their children and the school does not do enough to increase a sense of partnership.

- Many students have very limited experience of the wider community outside the immediate area of the school and the school does too little to make up for this.
- The presentation and content of the annual reports sent to parents about students' progress are unsatisfactory.

Commentary

38. Parents are mostly happy with the work of the school. However, their understanding of the school's aims for their children's education is limited and so is their level of support. The school makes some efforts to find better ways of reaching out to them. For instance, the annual meetings offered for parents to talk to teachers now start soon after the end of afternoon school instead of in the evening. This is a step in the right direction as numbers attending, though still low, have increased a bit. Nearly one in five parents who express a view are dissatisfied with the information they get about their child's progress and they are right in their criticism. The reports they receive are confusing because the different subjects give information in different layouts. The judgements of students' achievement are at times over-enthusiastic, and achievement in citizenship is not reported at all.
39. Good efforts are made to give parents clear information in newsletters. However, teachers find that quite often parents do not cope readily with any written information, either in English or in their own first language where this is different. Parents' response is often much better when staff talk to them instead of sending letters. Parents of children with special educational needs have a very good level of involvement in annual reviews of statements, because staff keep in touch with them by telephone and through outreach workers. Similarly, the two outreach staff, who have skills in several community languages, follow up absenteeism with some success through 'phone calls and visits. However, there are many parents who seldom get this kind of personal contact to tell them about teachers' aims for their children and how they can help.
40. Some aspects of partnership with the community are successful. Visitors are invited into school and contribute to what students learn. The headteacher is building links with other schools and with a range of local community organisations. He fosters understanding in the community about the work of the school. Regular community use of the buildings also helps to build trust. However, the impact of the wider community on students' learning is too limited. A variety of visits are organised to places that help their understanding of the history and culture of their country. However, students often have few other chances to see places away from their school and homes. The school does not do enough to fill this gap in their experience. It has yet to find ways of further boosting all students' first-hand experiences of places and events in their city and beyond.

Sixth form

The sixth form has good links with local universities and satisfactory links with parents and the community.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Links with local universities contribute to students' success on higher level courses in the sixth form and to their career paths when they leave school.

Commentary

41. Links with local universities make a good contribution to the studies of students who follow AS and A-level courses. For instance, university speakers contribute to the biology course, while law and psychology students benefit from access to a university library. Links are also in place to help female students in particular. They are able to pursue their career paths at a local university so that their studies are compatible with their strong family values. Students also benefit from opportunities such as training to assist with the University of the First Age.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership of the school by the headteacher is good and its management is satisfactory. Governors do a good job, but governance is unsatisfactory, as some statutory requirements are not met.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school has made good progress under the leadership of the headteacher.
- There is a remarkable difference between students' experiences inside and outside the school.
- The management of the curriculum is unsatisfactory.
- Governors fail to meet their statutory responsibilities.

Commentary

42. When the school was last inspected, attendance was low, exclusions were very high and students were underachieving in several subjects. Since that time the school has made good progress because of the leadership provided by the headteacher. Teachers now work as effective teams across the two sites, rather than before when the three sites operated with a high degree of autonomy. Key to the improvement has been the appointment of several new middle managers, particularly in English, mathematics and science where standards are now rising quickly. One important feature of the school that hits any visitor is the contrast as soon as you walk through the door. Outside, the streets are dirty, noisy and parents write of feeling unsafe. Cross the threshold into the school and you enter a sanctuary; there is calm, quiet and a purposeful air that exudes an aura of education. All staff play a part in this, typified by the member of staff and his assistant who are responsible for the front entrance at the Perry Barr site. Together, they help visitors, ensure students get to lessons on time, maintain excellent standards of behaviour in the foyer and are a credit to the school. This is their patch, they are proud of it and they keep it in excellent condition.
43. Nevertheless, there are weaknesses in the leadership and management of the curriculum, which reduce the overall quality to satisfactory. The school has tried to adapt to the changing needs of students joining the school, and in some areas has been very successful. The provision for students who are at an early stage of learning English, for example, is very good and the school is doing a very good job of improving language and literacy skills in the lower school. However, too little thought has gone into improving the curriculum for an increasing number of students staying on for the sixth form. The school has been slow to consider the curriculum for 14 to 19 year olds as a whole, rather than two separate parts, so students are following courses in the sixth form for which they have not been prepared.
44. The school runs very smoothly on a day-to-day basis, remarkably so given the distance between sites. Staff adhere to policies, and senior managers have a good knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses in teaching. There are, however, a couple of weaknesses in the way that the school is managed. Firstly, whereas the school has good information on standards of *attainment*, it is not clear enough about how different groups are *achieving*, so there may be issues about which the school managers are unaware. Secondly, although the school development plan has very good objectives, it is not clear how these are to be met, or how the school will judge the progress towards its objectives. This leaves some middle managers in a situation where they are unsure how to support the school's development plan.
45. The governing body has a very good understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses; governors can talk about examination results in considerable detail. They have been right to focus their attention on the core subjects of English, mathematics and science, and this attention is bearing fruit. However, governance as a whole is unsatisfactory because the governors are not ensuring that the

school provides lessons in ICT for all students in Years 10 and 11, or in religious education in the sixth form. Reports to parents also do not meet statutory requirements and there is no daily act of collective worship.

Sixth form

The leadership of the sixth form is unsatisfactory; its management is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is no one with an overview of the sixth form to drive it forward.

Commentary

46. The current head of sixth form has real responsibility only for the pastoral care of the sixth form, a job she carries out very well. However, no one has responsibility for analysing performance data and ensuring that the messages that such data provides are acted upon; no one is charged with the responsibility of driving up standards.
47. Many aspects of the sixth form are very well managed, such as the systems for ensuring attendance, which are particularly effective. However, with a lack of data on performance, the development plan focuses on aspects such as improving the environment rather than improving standards.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	4331049
Total expenditure	4304440
Expenditure per student	3470

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	26609
Balance carried forward to the next	26609

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

English

Provision in English is **satisfactory**.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Well below average	Well below average
Achievement	Good	Satisfactory
Teaching and learning	Good	Satisfactory

Leadership	Satisfactory
Management	Satisfactory
Progress since previous inspection	Satisfactory

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The new strategy for teaching literacy is proving effective in raising standards in Years 7 to 9.
- Some of the teaching is very good.
- The teaching of basic literacy in Years 10 and 11 has limited effect.
- Checking on the quality of teaching is not being used effectively to share best practice and eliminate less effective practice.

Commentary

Examination results

48. In the 2003 national tests at the end of Year 9, results were very low in comparison with the national average. However, results have been improving significantly since 2001. In 2002, GCSE results in English were very low compared to the national average and results in English literature were below average. In 2003, GCSE results improved significantly in both subjects.

Standards and achievement

49. When students enter the school their skills in speaking and listening are well below average; their writing skills are very low. Many students are keen to take part in class discussion but they often have limited vocabularies, confuse their tenses and rely heavily upon colloquialisms. Very few understand how to express themselves formally. However, by the time they reach Year 9, students become more self-critical and are better able to find the right tone for different social situations. The limitations inherent in speaking are more pronounced in students' written work. The small number of higher attainers is able to write for different audiences but the majority of students do not have this range and flexibility. Many students write only in simple sentences. The work of most students contains many errors of spelling, punctuation and grammar. Reading comprehension is a relative strength in the school. Although students find difficulty in explaining their understanding in written form, their oral responses to questions indicate they are often alert readers with good powers of recall.

50. In Years 10 and 11, students improve their skills but at a rate that means they are still well below the average by the end of Year 11. Higher attaining students learn how to use a more

formal style and how to employ the correct technical vocabulary as, for example, when writing about literature. Such students also become more careful in re-drafting their work so as to improve its quality. As a result, examples of well-planned and carefully word-processed work were seen on a variety of challenging topics, such as a comparison of short stories by Arthur Conan Doyle. However, it remains the case that whilst most students have a sound understanding of what they read and can communicate satisfactorily through speech, their written work is frequently of a low standard. The work of middle and lower attaining students is often brief and ungrammatical and sometimes barely intelligible.

Teaching and learning

51. Teaching and learning are good in Years 7 to 9 and satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. Examples of very good teaching were also seen in Years 7 to 9. When teaching is most effective, lessons are well planned both individually and as a sequence. This means that students are aware how all their lessons are connected, so they feel they are moving forward. In individual lessons they know what they are expected to learn and what they are expected to do, so they are eager to play their part and learn new skills. Students also are better able to concentrate when lessons include variety. Thus in many lessons seen, ‘starter’ activities were used well to revise topics or to introduce new ones, before the focus of attention shifted to the main topic which was to be covered. A feature of the very good lessons was that when the teachers set a written task, they did not simply *tell* students what to do, they *showed* them what to do. This was made all the more effective by the use of overhead projectors, so that teacher could be looking at the students and engaging them in discussion whilst at the same time showing them how to express their ideas effectively. Most teachers maintain effective discipline and create an orderly environment in which learning can take place.
52. Teachers have made very effective use of strategies outlined in the government initiatives for Years 7 to 9. In particular, the exceptionally high proportions of students who enter the school with low standards of literacy are taught the ‘progress units’ in very small groups. This has helped them to gain better access to the National Curriculum. However, similar strategies are not being applied in Years 10 and 11 and so the same level of improvement is not being seen.
53. When teaching is less effective, the pace of the lesson is too slow, the work lacks variety and students are not given the opportunity to be active in their own learning. In such lessons students learn slowly, they are inclined to behave inappropriately and the teacher maintains order through insistence rather than by arousing students’ curiosity and enthusiasm. Some marking is superficial and does not show students how to improve. There is less use made of ICT in teaching and learning than is usually seen. Very little use is made of dictionaries or thesauruses.

Leadership and management

54. At the time of the inspection, the head of faculty was absent. However, the team works co-operatively and efficiently. Standards in Years 7 to 9 have been raised through the effective implementation of the literacy strategy. However, checking on the quality of teaching has not yet resulted in the sharing of best practice and the elimination of less effective practice, especially in Years 10 and 11.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

55. Standards of literacy across the curriculum are well below average. However, the school has recently appointed a literacy co-ordinator and a very effective strategy has been devised. This has had a particular impact upon teaching and learning strategies in Years 7 to 9. Many lower attaining students receive intensive teaching in small groups in Year 7 to help them improve their reading and writing skills. Most teachers use a three-part lesson structure, which enables them to consolidate students' learning as they go along. The best of the work seen is concerned with the development of language, with a particular focus upon writing. The emphasis upon literacy at the Perry Barr site is to be seen in the excellent wall displays in a number of the classrooms and the main hall.
56. However, whilst the literacy strategy is becoming rapidly embedded into the teaching and learning process in Years 7 to 9, its impact has not yet extended to Years 10 and 11. Additionally, there are inconsistencies between faculties.

Modern foreign languages

French

Provision in French is **very good**.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Average	Above average
Achievement	Very good	Very good
Teaching and learning	Very good	Very good

Leadership	Very good
Management	Very good
Progress since previous inspection	Very good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers challenge all groups of students so that they work to the maximum of their capability.
- Students achieve very well at GCSE because they are very well taught.
- Students listen very attentively and develop very good listening skills.
- Students do not always develop their spoken French as much as they might because there are some missed opportunities for them to practise the language in pairs.

Commentary

Examination results

57. In French, examination results were above average in 2002, but were slightly lower in 2003. Students have performed much better in French than in other subjects they study over the past three years.

Standards and achievement

58. When students start the course in Year 7, they find the skills of reading and writing difficult. They have problems copying new words accurately and many have poor handwriting and presentational skills. They also have problems with understanding how to approach a reading passage that contains unfamiliar words. However, because of the careful teaching, all of the

different groups of students make very good progress. Students with special educational needs make very good progress because the teachers are well aware of their needs and plan well to help them, by giving them carefully designed tasks. Higher attaining students also make very good progress as they have many opportunities to work on challenging activities and are continually encouraged to improve their work. They are, for example, able to use several tenses and give their opinions well, linking their ideas and using some complex language at times.

59. By the end of Year 11, students' skills are above average in French; they are achieving very well because their standards were below average when they were in Year 9. Higher attainers from all ethnic groups do particularly well as they are constantly given hard but achievable tasks and enjoy the opportunity to do coursework. These students produce some good quality written work as part of their coursework although reading remains an area which is weaker than the other skills as students do not always have access to a wide enough range of extended and authentic texts. Students with special educational needs make very good progress; teachers are aware of their needs and support them very well. Students speak French with good fluency and pronunciation but some shy students are very hesitant in their replies. Students have very well developed listening skills as they are given plenty of practice, by listening both to the teacher speaking French and to tapes.

Teaching and learning

60. Teaching is very good because of the sheer consistency of good teaching that students receive; lesson after lesson the teaching is good or better. Learning is very good because students rise to the challenges they are given and enjoy lessons in which they are often expected to complete a lot of work and to use language they have learnt previously in a new way. Most teachers use French a great deal to explain tasks which means that students are constantly exposed to a lot of language and develop good listening skills. Teachers support the less able students well, insisting on accurate copying and making sure that instructions are very clear so that all students are supported. This is especially so in writing where teachers make sure students know and apply the rules, teaching students how to spell so that work is often accurate. Relationships between staff and students are very good; students know that they are expected to listen carefully and teachers deal with minor instances of lack of attention well. ICT is used well when available to help students improve their writing skills but access to computer rooms is difficult.
61. Generally teachers plan lessons that have clear objectives and use carefully selected resources and activities that are interesting for students. Nevertheless, occasionally teachers do not allow students sufficient time to practise language in pairs. Although they do get the opportunity to talk to the teacher, some shy students do not volunteer and so get less practice. Most students listen to tapes regularly but in a few lessons seen the work was too hard for them. Assessment of students' performance is good, especially verbal feedback in lessons. Students' progress is carefully monitored and compared to national standards, so that both teachers and students know what improvements are needed.

Leadership and management

62. The department now provides a much better quality of education than at the time of the previous inspection when students were underachieving. Results have improved so students now do better in languages than in most of the other subjects they take in the school. Teachers work well together to ensure consistency of approach and appropriately challenge all groups of

students. The curriculum has been adapted, for example by introducing a coursework element to improve writing skills and this has also contributed to the rise in results at GCSE.

Community languages

Provision in community languages is **satisfactory**.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Below average	Below average
Achievement	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Teaching and learning	Satisfactory	Satisfactory

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since previous inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students' attitudes to learning are very good because they are highly motivated to study the subject.
- The subject has made good improvement since the previous inspection because it is led well.
- The subject is well resourced which has led to higher standards in lessons.
- Examination results are low as result of previous unsatisfactory provision.
- Students do not get enough opportunities to speak or write extended pieces in lessons.

Commentary

Examination results

63. Examination results for Bengali and Urdu were below national averages in 2002 and fell in 2003. A very high proportion of students in Urdu continue to gain grades but in 2003 the proportion of Bengali students gaining no grade grew.

Standards and achievement

64. By the end of Year 9, students' skills, especially in writing, are below average although their listening and understanding are good. Students do not have the skills to engage in extended conversation or role-play, but are given little opportunity to do so. By the end of Year 11 standards are still below average. Low levels of literacy in both Bengali and Urdu impede progress although students develop greater confidence in listening. They are able to listen to longer passages of authentic speech with a high degree of understanding

Teaching and learning

65. Teachers have a very good knowledge of their subject. Their pronunciation provides an excellent role model for students. Teachers plan lessons well using good resources. They have enthusiasm for their subject that is conveyed to students. They use authentic speech to bring lessons to life. There are insufficient speaking opportunities in lessons, however, for the students themselves. Teachers accept one-word or short phrase answers in many cases instead of eliciting longer replies or encouraging students to ask questions. Too many writing activities are based on copying which limits the opportunities for independent writing or writing for the purpose of communicating. Attitudes to learning are very good. Students are mostly highly

motivated to learn the language and have high standards of behaviour. Lower attaining students take less care in the presentation of their written work and this is often not followed up or corrected by the teacher.

Leadership and management

66. The department provides a significantly better quality of education than at the time of the last inspections. Issues to resolve, such as an improved scheme of work, have been addressed with the recent arrival of a new co-ordinator for community languages but these have yet to translate into improved results. Urdu and Bengali are both offered from Year 8. The languages are taught in dedicated teaching rooms except in Year 8 and the department is well resourced for staffing, including bilingual support in Bengali, and materials. ICT is underused in the department, however.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Well below average	Well below average
Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching and learning	Good	Good

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since previous inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good and this results in students achieving well.
- The head of department provides good leadership and management of a department which works hard to raise standards.
- The lack of a numeracy co-ordinator is hampering the drive to improve standards in other subjects.
- Schemes of work in Years 7 to 11 do not provide enough guidance for teachers.

Commentary

Examination results

67. Results in the 2003 National Curriculum tests at the end of Year 9 were well below average. Results have been improving rapidly over the recent past. The GCSE results in 2002 were well below average and were similar in 2003.

Standards and achievement

68. By the end of Year 9, students' numerical skills overall are well below average, but this is a good level of achievement given their standards on joining the school. The lower attaining students can, with some prompting, add and subtract negative numbers. Middle attainers can use ICT to explore number patterns. Higher attainers can add and subtract fractions and in some cases multiply and divide mixed numbers. In Year 11, higher attaining students can use circle theorems to evaluate inscribed angles, whilst middle attaining students can, with some success, add fractions with different denominators. Lower attainers can name the points of the compass and use grid references to plot co-ordinates. Overall, the achievement by Year 11 is good in relation to the students' standards when they were in Year 9.

Teaching and learning

69. Teachers have a good knowledge and understanding of mathematics and generally plan their lessons well. The lessons have a brisk pace and use the three-part structure effectively to raise achievement. However, even more challenge could be built into lessons for individual students who are really high attainers, in order that they may achieve their potential. Good work is carried out in improving basic literacy, such as in Year 7 investigations where students' literacy skills are reinforced through the use of appropriate vocabulary and writing frames. ICT, where available, is used effectively. In one Year 10 lesson on probability, students could clearly understand relative frequency when simulated on an interactive whiteboard.

70. Teachers share overall lesson objectives with the students so that they understand what is expected of the lesson. Only in the better lessons, however, are the tasks, attainment targets, levels and time allocated, made known to the students. Where this happens, students understand the tasks they have to complete and the relevance to their overall learning. However, students in Years 10 and 11 know from their target grades, on display in classrooms, what is expected of them.
71. Behaviour is good because teachers manage their classes well. Homework is set regularly and there is good diagnostic marking taking place, instructing students to complete or revisit work.

Leadership and management

72. The good leadership has resulted in a strong team with a positive ethos; standards are rising rapidly. There are procedures in place for assessing students' performance as they progress through the school. These are used effectively to group students, so that work is set at an appropriately challenging level for most of them. However, links with primary feeder and other secondary schools, in order to share information and good practice, are not good enough. Schemes of work also need further development, as they do not guide teachers on the best teaching methods and resources to use to further improve teaching.

Mathematics across the curriculum

73. The strategy for teaching mathematics as a basic skill in subjects is satisfactory. There is an embryonic numeracy strategy in place. A half-day, whole school, training session has been delivered by the department, as well as surveys initiated in subjects as to their current numeracy practice. However, numeracy across the curriculum needs further development, which is hampered by the lack of a co-ordinator.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **satisfactory**.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Well below average	Well below average
Achievement	Good	Satisfactory
Teaching and learning	Good	Good

Leadership	Satisfactory
Management	Satisfactory
Progress since previous inspection	Satisfactory

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good, leading to good learning.
- The assessment and monitoring of students' progress are good.
- There are not enough textbooks for research or homework.
- Classes are too often split between teachers, which inhibits achievement in Years 10 and 11.
- Students do not get enough guidance with short-term targets.

Commentary

Examination results

74. In 2003 results in the Key Stage 3 national tests at the end of Year 9 were well below the national average but continued the improving trend of the recent past. Results in the GCSE examinations were well below average in 2002, but fell slightly in 2003, although there was an increase in the percentage of A*-C grades.

Standards and achievement

75. When students enter the school they have very low attainment compared to national standards and the progress made by the end of Year 9 indicates good achievement; standards are maintained through Years 10 and 11. The application of the government initiatives in Years 7 to 9 has raised the attainment at the end of Year 9. At the end of Year 9 higher attaining students are able to use correct scientific vocabulary appropriately and understand the principles of scientific investigation. Lower attaining students at this stage are often held back in their scientific understanding by poor literacy skills but are able to understand the idea of a fair experiment and can evaluate the importance of the results of an experiment, particularly with reference to themselves. By the end of Year 11 higher attaining students have a grasp of concepts such as chemical formulae and atomic structure and lower attaining students understand the significance of many aspects of science, particularly those related to the environment and everyday life.

Teaching and learning

76. In Years 7 to 9, lessons are well prepared, time and class management are good and students' interest and enthusiasm are captured by a stimulating variety of practical work. There are many students with special educational needs; some of these are taught in a separate small group and a teaching assistant occasionally supports others in class. All students are helped by the use of appropriate handouts and guides from the teachers. Homework is used to support, reinforce and develop the work covered in class. Assessment procedures are now well developed and students are well aware of both their targets and their present performance. Language and literacy skills are improved by the use of writing frames, clear display and emphasis on key words: reading, silently and aloud, is also encouraged wherever possible. Achievement in Years 10 and 11 is not yet as good as that in Years 7 to 9, because the strategies put into place by the new head of department have not yet had time to have an impact on standards, although the teaching is now good in these years. The splitting of classes between teachers is also reducing achievement in Years 10 and 11.

Leadership and management

77. The newly appointed head of department leads an experienced team of teachers, committed to the raising of standards. However, there are too many classes split between teachers. In Years 10 and 11 students are taught by a range of teachers to make best use of the teachers' particular areas of specialist knowledge but there is loss of continuity for a group. Work schemes in Years 7, 8 and 9 are well developed and effective but those for Years 10 and 11 are in the process of review and rewriting by the department. At present all Year 11 students are entered for the double science option and this is very challenging for the lower attaining students. Students' overall progress is monitored carefully and accurately using end of topic tests, but there is no system in place at present to indicate to the students the short-term targets of specific things to do to achieve a higher level. The teachers mark exercise books but comments rarely give clear indications of how students could achieve a higher level. No textbooks are available to be issued to students at present and this greatly inhibits the potential for both research work and homework.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision in ICT is **unsatisfactory**.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Well below average	Average
Achievement	Good	Unsatisfactory
Teaching and learning	Good	Good

Leadership	Good
Management	Unsatisfactory
Progress since previous inspection	Unsatisfactory

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve well In Years 7 to 9 because of the good teaching.
- Students' attitudes and behaviour are good because of the high standards set by teachers.
- Teachers are not using assessment information to set targets or to monitor achievement.
- The management of ICT across the school is unsatisfactory and results in many Year 10 and 11 students underachieving because they are not taught the requirements of the National Curriculum.

Commentary

Examination results

78. Results in GNVQ examinations and the GCSE short course were average in 2002. Results were similar in 2003.

Standards and achievement

79. By the end of Year 9, standards are well below average but this represents a good level of achievement given students' level of attainment on entry to the school. Students quickly make gains in their skills of using computers to produce spreadsheets and presentations because they are presented with a well-structured series of imaginative lessons. They access software confidently and move information from one application to another with ease. Students are familiar with the use of the Internet, word processing and databases but their progress is restricted by their poor literacy skills that often prevent them from entering information accurately. By the end of Year 11, the students following the GNVQ Intermediate course produce good presentations and have well-developed project management skills that they use to solve spreadsheet-based problems. They are not as good at checking their work for errors and modifying it. Students with special educational needs make similar progress to their classmates because their specific needs are dealt with well. However, there are many students in Years 10 and 11 that underachieve because they do not have ICT lessons and so do not cover the requirements of the National Curriculum.

Teaching and learning

80. Students learn well because teaching is good overall. Teachers have a very good knowledge of the subject, which they pass on to students well. The teachers structure lessons well and insist on very high standards of behaviour. Very good use is made of interactive white boards to feed the students bite-sized chunks of information to get them working quickly. Teachers circulate the class really well throughout the lesson to monitor progress and to challenge students further. In the best lessons teachers make the content interesting, maintaining students' concentration by moving rapidly from one task to the next. It is this high pace of

learning that ensures students achieve well. Students' attitudes to the subject are good. Despite really good on-the-spot feedback to students the assessment information about students in Years 7 to 9 is not yet fully used to ensure that achievements are recognised and appropriate targets set.

Leadership and management

81. The leadership and management of the department are good but the management of ICT in the school is unsatisfactory because senior managers have still not provided a curriculum that allows all students to study the subject. Exciting schemes of work have been developed to match the students' needs and move them forward quickly. Good support is given to inexperienced staff. Resources are very good and really help students achieve well.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

82. The use of computers in other areas of the curriculum is generally satisfactory in Years 7 to 9. Many subjects use computers well; for example, in design and technology, there is some excellent use of computer-aided design and manufacturing software to create sewing patterns of eyebrows. In some French lessons, ICT is used to reinforce vocabulary. However, in music there are no computers, so students cannot create and manipulate sounds. In Years 10 and 11 many students have large gaps in their ICT knowledge and skills because they do not get enough opportunities to build on the skills they gained in Years 7 to 9.

HUMANITIES

Geography

Provision in geography is **satisfactory**.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Well below average	Well below average
Achievement	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Teaching and learning	Satisfactory	Satisfactory

Leadership	Satisfactory
Management	Satisfactory
Progress since previous inspection	Satisfactory

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers make good use of the available resources.
- Summaries of lessons are not used well enough to reinforce what has been taught.
- There are weaknesses in marking and assessment.

Commentary

Examination results

83. Results in the 2002 GCSE examination were very low and were similar in 2003.

Standards and achievement

84. By the end of Year 9 students have gained skills in reading maps and knowledge of topics such as river features and settlements but this study of theory is not supported by any fieldwork. Students have knowledge of geographical terms, but do not use them well enough to show

understanding or support their answers with examples. Higher attaining students have good language skills, but for many writing is a weakness because of grammatical inaccuracies. Improvement in writing is not fast enough because the subject has not yet developed a policy to improve language standards. By the end of Year 11 students have a basic level of knowledge of places and topics. They know about population movements in Los Angeles but are very limited in their depth of understanding of why people migrate. They gain knowledge of terms such as ‘plate margins’ and understand about the processes affecting the Earth’s structure but find difficulty in recalling knowledge previously learned. Nevertheless, given students’ well below average standards on joining the school, they do as well as expected. Results at GCSE have not yet reached the level of the standards observed in the current Year 11, as the initiatives put in place by the new head of department have not yet had time to bear fruit.

Teaching and learning

85. In Years 7 to 9, students are taught by specialists who explain points clearly to them. The aims of lessons are explained and resources used well to help learning. In a Year 7 lesson about map reading for example, achievement was good because the teacher captured students’ interest in practical work using maps, books and visual equipment to help understanding. As a result concentration was good and much was achieved in the lesson. Teachers mark work regularly but do not give enough attention to correcting language errors or commenting on content, so students are not sure how well they have done. In Years 10 and 11, teachers regularly consolidate earlier learning but do not use the summaries of lessons effectively to reinforce what has been taught. Teachers structure lessons and cater to meet the learning of lower attaining students but do not provide enough opportunities to ensure that the highest attaining students are being extended, especially in their written and oral responses.

Leadership and management

86. The recently appointed head of department has made rapid strides to plan the future needs of the subject and has made a start on improving the programmes of study. Much remains to be done, however. The schemes of work are in urgent need of revision and arrangements to assess students’ achievement and standards against National Curriculum criteria are not in place so teachers cannot be sure how well students are achieving. Since the previous inspection satisfactory progress has been made in raising students’ achievement, as geography was one of the worst subjects in the school and not providing a satisfactory education.

History

Provision in history is **good**.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Well below average	Below average
Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching and learning	Good	Good

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since previous inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- All students achieve equally well because enthusiastic teachers provide interesting lessons that are well matched to students' learning needs.
- Accurate assessment of their work ensures that students know how well they are doing and what to do to improve further.
- Teachers do not yet use a wide enough range of strategies to strengthen students' literacy skills.
- Teachers in Years 7 to 9 do not sufficiently reinforce their good oral feedback with written comments on students' work, showing them how to improve.

Commentary

Examination results

87. Results in the 2002 GCSE examinations were below average and this meant that students' achievement was good. Results in 2003 were lower but that was not typical of the trend of recent years.

Standards and achievement

88. In Year 9, students steadily develop their skills in using sources of evidence to interpret events. Although the standard of written work is well below the average level that is expected nationally, it represents good achievement, considering that they enter Year 7 with very low standards in English, and many who join later have very little English. All students display, through their speaking, good knowledge of topics such as the struggle for supremacy between Catholics and Protestants during the reigns of the Tudors. Lower attaining students achieve as well as others because their specific needs are met in lessons.
89. By the end of Year 11, students' work is below average and their achievement is good. Their thoughtful and well-organised coursework assignments, making effective use of ICT, earn good marks and help them to achieve well in GCSE examinations. Students of all attainment levels develop good evaluation skills on issues such as, for instance, the extent to which advances in medical knowledge and practice were helped or hindered by Christian and Islamic beliefs in medieval times. For many students English is not their first language and they achieve as well as others because of the good support they receive.

Teaching and learning

90. In Years 7 to 9, enthusiastic teachers explain clearly the aims of lessons and provide a good variety of tasks that are well matched to the wide range of students' needs. So, higher attaining students' understanding of Queen Mary's motives for her harsh treatment of Protestants is greatly advanced when they hang on every word of their teacher's powerful and moving description of Mary's personal experiences. Similarly, lower attaining students' grasp of life in medieval England, and of spoken English and spelling of words, is enhanced by work to improve their understanding of all three. The development of students' written English is less secure and the range of strategies for improving it is too restricted. Students' work is assessed accurately; they know how well they are doing and what they must do to improve because of good oral feedback from teachers. Written comments in students' books are less informative.
91. By the end of Year 11 students develop skills in organising and presenting good coursework assignments because teachers have emphasised this in lessons. Students' interpretative skills are enhanced in lively lessons, such as the one in which they learned, in the manner of medieval doctors, to identify diseases by examining the colour of urine samples! Teachers' accurate

assessment of work and their experience of the requirements of GCSE result in students' good achievement.

Leadership and management

92. The subject is well led and managed by an enthusiastic and experienced teacher. Development plans are clearly focused on further raising students' achievement, although they do not yet state explicitly enough the strategies that teachers must use to improve students' literacy skills further. Good progress has been made since the last inspection in the quality of assessment, and students' use of ICT.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **satisfactory**.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Below average	Below average
Achievement	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Teaching and learning	Satisfactory	Satisfactory

Leadership	Satisfactory
Management	Satisfactory
Progress since previous inspection	Satisfactory

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Topics are selected that are relevant to the students and as a result their interest is aroused.
- Teachers treat the responses of students with respect thus encouraging them to participate.
- Assessment is underdeveloped and so does not provide accurate guidance about students' standards.
- Marking does not give students enough information of how to do better.

Commentary

Examination results

93. Results in the 2002 GCSE examination were well below average. Results in 2003 improved significantly.

Standards and achievement

94. Standards in Year 9 are below average and students' achievement is satisfactory; their understanding of faith and religion on joining the school is better than many other aspects of their work. They can identify the key features of the faiths studied and have good opportunities to consider their own beliefs and practices. Their understanding of prejudice and discrimination, however, is limited to examples, rather than analysis of what causes it and how it can be opposed. Students make satisfactory progress in identifying detail and presenting their projects. Few students analyse the information they receive unless given a clear writing frame that leads them to do so.

95. Standards in Year 11 are below average. Higher attaining students achieve much higher levels, and in their oral work they demonstrate good understanding of the concepts studied. Discussion enables them to recognise that people may have different opinions, but there is insufficient extended writing to enable students to analyse and develop their own views. Students consider

moral issues of abortion, euthanasia and homosexuality but from one viewpoint, not demonstrating an understanding of alternative views. Lower attaining students have limited recall and weak language skills, which reduces their understanding of concepts. Examination results are lower than the standards observed because of the difficulties that students have with writing down their ideas.

Teaching and learning

96. Teachers have good subject knowledge that enables them to provide clear explanations. Lessons start promptly and time is used well. Topics are selected that are relevant to the students so their interest is aroused, and students study individuals such as Gandhi who are good role models. Teachers treat the responses of students with respect thus encouraging them to participate. In the best lessons, teachers use activities that involve students in thinking about the information they gain in response to clear questions. Lessons are less successful when the objectives of the lessons are to complete tasks that lack challenge and can be accomplished with little thought. Where teachers accept work that is incomplete or below standard students' presentation and effort deteriorate. Teachers view books regularly, but there is insufficient guidance for some groups and no indication of how a student has achieved. There are no whole year group assessments that would enable teachers to monitor the progress of individuals.
97. Students make most progress when they consider the reasons and effects of belief rather than just the characteristics of the faith itself. Students with English as an additional language or who have special educational needs make good progress when supported by an additional adult, but at other times there is insufficient notice of their individual needs. Some information sheets use over-complicated language and students do not readily inform the teacher if words are unfamiliar to them. Progress is unsatisfactory for some students who are willing to respond orally, but are reluctant to write, and avoid doing so by chatting and being slow to settle.

Leadership and management

98. The department has developed a clear identity within the school and the numbers choosing to follow the course at GCSE are rising. The range of teaching styles is being expanded and teachers are encouraged to respond to the needs of the students. Assessment is not developed, however, and thus cannot be used to identify individual achievement or to indicate areas for improvement across the department. Monitoring of teaching is weak and so there is a lack of consistency across the department. Good practice is not spread systematically.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

Provision in design and technology is **good**.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Well below average	Below average
Achievement	Satisfactory	Good
Teaching and learning	Satisfactory	Good

Leadership	Good
Management	Very good
Progress since previous inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students achieve very well in food and textiles technology as a result of the very good teaching.
- The management of the department is very good, with highly effective policies.
- Students' skills of analysis and evaluation are well below average, particularly in resistant materials.
- Students' weak writing skills mean that their coursework is not as good as other aspects of their work.

Commentary

Examination results

99. Results in the GCSE examinations in 2002 were below average. Results improved in 2003 and continue an upward trend.

Standards and achievement

100. By the end of Year 9, students' making skills are below average. They use a variety of tools and equipment although not always accurately or with confidence in all material areas. Students' designing skills are well below average. Students' writing skills are weak and often restrict their ability to convey their ideas. By the end of Year 11, students' making skills have improved and are average although their design skills are still not as good and are below average. Students use a range of tools accurately and appropriately. Many students struggle with research; their annotation of design work is well below average. Overall, students' achievement is good given their standards upon entry to the course. Students' work within food technology and textiles is consistently thorough, with detailed analysis and evaluations; students achieve very well in these areas. However, in resistant materials, students' coursework generally lacks creativity and flair.

Teaching and learning

101. Students benefit from knowledgeable and committed teachers. Teaching is well paced and there are clear learning objectives, particularly in food and textiles classes. Students enjoy their lessons because teachers have planned activities that capture the interest of students although they find some of the resistant materials activities boring, especially in Years 7 to 9. Students with special educational needs learn at the same rate as other students because of the good use made of the technical support staff and the additional learning materials supplied by the teachers. Assessment is used very well to motivate students and to set targets for improvement. In Years 10 and 11, teachers use their knowledge and experience to challenge and extend the students. Students benefit from the high expectations of their teachers and respond positively to the challenging activities. A strength of the department is the way that teachers group students within a lesson so as to create mixed gender and ability groups; this is helping to breakdown cultural and social barriers. Whilst teaching is good overall, teachers often dominate lessons and miss opportunities to involve students actively in the lessons. This is more often the case in resistant materials and especially in Years 7 to 9 where the teaching is only satisfactory.

Example of an outstanding lesson in textiles

What a start to the lesson: students came into the room, full of enthusiasm and eager to continue with the production of their textile banners; within minutes students were beavering away feverishly. Each student had carefully researched a country that could be represented by his or her banner design. Designs illustrated flair and imagination, for example, two countries were represented by dragons, Wales and Japan; students were able to discuss the merits of both designs, how they differed and what the eyebrows of the dragon symbolised. Meanwhile the teacher was asking each student how he or she could improve their banner designs. The teacher's expert knowledge of CAD/CAM (Computer aided design and manufacture) came to the fore when students were asked to produce a piece of appliqué using the computerised sewing machine. This was carried out to a very high standard and students achieved exceedingly well. Throughout this exciting lesson, students analysed each other's work and gave very constructive feedback on how designs could be improved. This they did in a very mature manner, displaying immaculate behaviour and attitudes.

Leadership and management

102. The department is well led. The strong team ethos and commitment to improvement has enabled the subject to improve examination results and teaching. The management of the department is very good. Highly effective policies have been developed that ensure efficient and effective teaching and learning. The assessment and monitoring of teaching and learning are particularly good. Good progress has been made since the previous inspection: standards have improved because of improvements in teaching; students' overall achievement is now good.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Art and design

Provision in art and design is **unsatisfactory**.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Below average	Well below average
Achievement	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory
Teaching and learning	Unsatisfactory	Unsatisfactory

Leadership	Unsatisfactory
Management	Unsatisfactory
Progress since previous inspection	Unsatisfactory

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Planning is not done in enough detail to raise the quality of teaching.
- Teaching and achievement are good in pottery and textile design.
- There is not enough formal teaching of the key skills in drawing and painting.
- There is not enough evaluation of students' work to help them to improve.

Commentary

Examination results

103. Results in GCSE have been very low over the past three years.

Standards and achievement

104. By Year 9 there is a wide range of work covered but there is not enough depth or emphasis on the key skills of drawing and painting. Everything gets a light touch. For example, geometric drawing is not extended to design or linked to art of other cultures. Students have poor skills in

the use of shading for tone, texture and three-dimensional effects. They show poor skills in painting with regard to control and brushwork. Although students have had a lesson in point perspective they do not apply this learning to their drawings of interiors. Boys in particular do not make enough effort in this respect. Standards in pottery are average with some interesting designs and surface textures. Standards are average in work on portraits when students are taught the proportions formally.

105. Year 11 students do not do enough research and development on the topics studied. They are hindered in this respect by poor skills in literacy. Because of this they do not get inspiration from the work of major artists that would raise the standards of their own work. There is little use of ICT in the development of work. Standards in textiles are average in Years 10 and 11 and students are achieving well in this area. The teacher has chosen topics and approaches specifically designed to be of interest to boys, such as the use of metals and electronics. Some students have exquisite designs in surface pattern as a direct result of having up to 40 inspiring examples of styles provided for them. There is good use of ICT in textiles, and students have benefited from a visit to the London art galleries.

Teaching and learning

106. In Years 7 to 11 students do not get enough clear guidance to enable them to improve their skills in drawing and painting. They are given examples of some techniques for applying tone and texture but there are no follow-up exercises to apply these techniques and so improve their skills. Some of the teaching takes insufficient notice of whether or not students fully understand the concepts. In some cases simple ideas are presented in complicated ways and students miss the point. For the most part teachers do not demonstrate or illustrate clearly what is expected of students. There is little evaluation of the work done at the end of the lessons. Students, therefore, do not know how to improve. They do not get a clear understanding of the qualities needed to gain the higher levels in Key Stage 3 and in GCSE. Teaching is good in pottery and leads to average standards. There is good teaching for students with English as an additional language when they do printing and use this work to extend their use of language. Teaching is good in textiles. Students are given clear guidance on how and where to do research to extend their ideas. They also get demonstrations and illustrations on how to improve their work.

Leadership and management

107. Planning for many of the topics is not done in enough depth or detail to raise standards. There are inadequate strategies introduced to improve standards by Years 9 and 11. There has been unsatisfactory improvement since the previous inspection. The weaknesses in standards and teaching identified then have not been rectified.

Music

Provision in music is **satisfactory**.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Well below average	Well below average
Achievement	Satisfactory	Good
Teaching and learning	Satisfactory	Good

Leadership	Good
Management	Good

Progress since previous inspection	Unsatisfactory
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Main strengths and weaknesses

- Although results at GCSE have been very low, current Year 11 students are progressing well.
- Teaching encourages and engages students in their music making, developing positive attitudes and good behaviour.
- There is a growing range of activities to supplement the curriculum and challenge the more able.
- The concentration and application of boys' is not as good as that of girls.

Commentary

Examination results

108. Examination results were very low in 2002 and, although improved, remained so in 2003.

Standards and achievement

109. By the end of Year 9, students' musical skills are well below average. They play keyboards with elementary technical awareness, and develop compositions in groups, such as twelve-bar blues, with varying degrees of success in co-ordinating rhythm, pitch and harmony. They read simplified notation, but lack the skills to work with standard notation. By the end of Year 11, students' musical skills are well below average. Given that an exceptionally high proportion of the GCSE students have special educational needs, they make good progress, achieving well. Most students have little or no grasp of standard notation. With a few exceptions, they play instruments to an elementary standard, being able to use these skills to perform in small ensembles and to develop short compositions around given chord patterns. The few talented students achieve well as they are encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning. Because girls concentrate better than boys, they generally do better.

Teaching and learning

110. Teachers engage students well in practical musical making. Their insistence on good behaviour helps students to work constructively and collaboratively in group work. However, in too many groups boys and girls are not mixed, missing opportunities to develop mature personal relationships. Teaching assistants and, in particular, trainee teachers are well deployed to support in practical work, especially in Year 11. Lessons are planned well, but there are inconsistencies in adapting materials to the different capabilities of classes. This leads to some lower attaining students losing focus and concentration in their work. While targets are set and agreed with students, the levels awarded do not accurately reflect National Curriculum levels; the assessment of work is much more accurate in Year 11.

Leadership and management

111. Compared with the time of the previous inspection, standards in music are now lower. Boys do not achieve as well as girls; lower ability groups do not achieve as well as higher ability ones; the resourcing issue of using ICT in music lessons has not been addressed. However, the head of department, in post for only six months, is doing much to improve the department. There is now a good scheme of work, which promotes continuity and has a good range of practical topics, including singing, reflecting many traditions represented in the students' cultural backgrounds. This is reinforced by growing use of external agencies, such as Artsite, to develop learning initiatives, and by growing links with feeder schools and the wider community. While lower than the average uptake nationally, a growing proportion of students are taking

instrumental lessons. The singing-based course, which helps those students in an early stage of English language acquisition, is highly effective, building a sense of achievement and enjoyment as these students begin their move to mainstream lessons.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Provision in physical education is **satisfactory**.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Below average	Below average
Achievement	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Teaching and learning	Satisfactory	Satisfactory

Leadership	Good
Management	Satisfactory
Progress since previous inspection	Satisfactory

Main strengths and weaknesses

- GCSE results are improving as a result of good teaching of the examination classes.
- Very good relationships lead to students' positive attitudes towards the subject.
- There is not enough monitoring and development of teaching to ensure the best practice.
- Aspects of curriculum organisation hinder students' achievement in the subject.

Commentary

Examination results

112. GCSE results in 2002 were well below average, but improved, significantly, in 2003.

Standards and achievement

113. By Year 9, standards in students' practical skills are below average, representing satisfactory achievement in relation to their standards on entering the school. Boys achieve satisfactorily in football and girls in netball. Students with special needs are well integrated, achieving appropriately alongside their classmates. By Year 11, standards remain below average overall. However, boys of all capabilities achieve well in the practical aspects of the GCSE course, and above average standards were seen in cricket. Standards are below average in girls' hockey. Written coursework reflects a below average knowledge and understanding of theoretical aspects. In the non-GCSE course low attaining boys achieve well in badminton and girls achieve satisfactorily in health and fitness studies. Performance in extra-curricular sport is often above average, reflected in the achievements of boys in badminton, table tennis and cricket.

Teaching and learning

114. In all years, students benefit from enthusiastic teachers, whose very good relationships with students create a positive climate for learning. High standards of participation, dress and behaviour are expected and achieved. Students are well motivated and have good attitudes. The best learning occurs when teachers' expectations of what students are capable of doing are high, and they have clear objectives focused on what students are to learn. This was illustrated, well, in cricket and badminton, where carefully designed tasks ensured that boys of all capabilities made good progress. Very good teaching of GCSE theoretical aspects enabled students to draw

on their own experiences and to take an active role in contributing, effectively, to their own and others' learning on the prevention of sports injuries. Where learning is unsatisfactory, teaching lacks a focus on how students can improve their performance, and achievement is often very limited. In their 14th lesson of badminton, many Year 9 girls still could not serve, effectively. The good pace, challenge and mastery of the subject reported in the previous inspection are still evident in some lessons, but too much teaching lacks sufficient precision and rigour to raise standards significantly.

Leadership and management

115. Good leadership has focused on raising standards, and GCSE results are improving. Assessment data is used, well, to predict grades and set individual targets. Effective improvements in recent years include an expansion of extra-curricular sport. However, the monitoring and development of teaching are not having sufficient impact. Curriculum organisation also raises several issues. Boys and girls do not have equal access to aspects of the curriculum in Years 7 to 9. Units of six or seven hours' length are insufficient to ensure progression in students' learning.

BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES

For vocational ICT, see previous section headed 'Information and communication technology'.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Citizenship

Citizenship and personal social and health education are becoming well-integrated subjects. Humanities, life skills, careers and English also contribute well to citizenship.

Provision in citizenship is **satisfactory**.

	Year 9	Year 11
Standards	Well below average	Well below average
Achievement	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Teaching and learning	Satisfactory	Satisfactory

Leadership	Satisfactory
Management	Satisfactory
Progress since previous inspection	Not applicable

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The planning for lessons is good.
- Citizenship within subjects is not explicit and does not have a high enough profile.
- Assessment procedures are not good enough to clearly measure students' achievement.
- Work on gender and sexism is introduced too late.

Commentary

Examination results

116. At present there are no examination results.

Standards and achievement

117. Students arriving at school in Year 7 have well below average levels of both knowledge and understanding about being a citizen; for example, they have limited understanding of the purpose of rules. By the end of Year 9, standards remain well below average, although students have made satisfactory progress. Many Year 9 students know there is a European Union but are unsure of its purpose or membership. Most Year 9 students find discussion in small groups difficult partly due to poor language skills. Standards by the end of Year 11 remain well below average. All students make satisfactory progress. Many Year 11 students, through their work in careers lessons, know the basic contents of a curriculum vita but are uncertain about what to include under the different headings. Year 11 students show better understanding about customer rights.

Teaching and learning

118. Good planning overall ensures some consistency in the teaching. Aims of lessons are shared with students and, at the end of the lesson, teachers check to see that these have been met. Practical activities ensure all students are well involved as exemplified when Year 10 students successfully debate consumer rights scenarios. However, there are topics, like the functions of the European Community, which require a wider range of activities to meet the needs of all students. Teachers make good use of outside speakers and visitors, like the police, doctors, mayor and the local Member of Parliament to bring reality to the subject. However, there are not enough opportunities for students to go out into the community. The school council, which aims to increase participation as a citizen, does not involve Years 9, 10 and 11. Teachers successfully encourage students to share opinions and develop their own ideas through small group activities, such as Year 9 students showing respect and empathy for different religions as they draw on their own experiences. However, some students show immature behaviour and insufficiently developed listening skills, which inhibits learning. Citizenship is not made sufficiently explicit within subjects, as illustrated in science when studying environmental and industrial issues. Consequently students are not aware that they are becoming better-informed citizens. Marking and the assessment of students' progress are still at an early stage, so no one has a clear idea of the students' achievement.

Leadership and management

119. The assistant head and the citizenship co-ordinator give clear vision and direction. Working with colleagues they have brought some consistency, structure and enthusiasm to the subject. However, the status of citizenship is not high enough within other subjects. Work on issues of gender and sexism is only introduced in Year 9, when students in Year 7 clearly benefit from this aspect of the course.

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

In the inspection, **nine** subjects and courses were inspected and are reported on in detail. Work in other subjects and courses was sampled and contributed to the overall picture of teaching and learning in the school.

The table below shows entry and performance information for courses completed in 2002 comparisons are available.

Level 3 GCE AS-level courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Art and design	11	45.5	90.0	18.2	42.7	14.5	39.0
Biology	7	85.7	81.6	0.0	33.2	20.0	33.2
Chemistry	6	16.7	84.8	0.0	36.9	3.3	35.2
General studies	17	47.1	78.6	0.0	25.7	12.4	30.0
History	11	36.4	91.8	9.1	37.2	10.9	37.8
Information technology	9	66.7	78.2	0.0	20.6	16.7	28.5
Mathematics	8	25.0	74.2	0.0	34.3	8.8	31.3
Other languages	15	86.7	89.9	20.0	53.5	32.0	41.7
Other social studies	8	50.0	83.2	12.5	32.5	17.5	33.6
Physics	6	33.3	82.0	0.0	36.2	10.0	34.3
Sociology	6	83.3	83.7	16.7	33.6	28.3	33.8

Level 3 GCE A-level and VCE courses

Subject	Number entered	% gaining grades A-E		% gaining grades A-B		Average point score	
		School	England	School	England	School	England
Business studies	7	100.0	96.4	57.1	57.1	91.4	76.5
English literature	6	100.0	98.5	0.0	43.7	70.0	84.3
General studies	21	95.2	90.1	0.0	29.1	59.0	69.3
History	5	100.0	97.1	20.0	41.0	72.0	81.2
Other social studies	6	100.0	94.3	0.0	38.9	63.3	77.7
Sociology	9	100.0	95.4	22.2	39.6	68.9	78.6

ENGLISH, LANGUAGES AND COMMUNICATION

English

Students study for A-level and GCSE in the sixth form. Both courses were a focus for the inspection.

Provision in English is **satisfactory**.

	Year 12	Year 13
Standards	Well below average	Below average
Achievement	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Teaching and learning	Satisfactory	Satisfactory

Leadership	Satisfactory
Management	Satisfactory
Progress since previous inspection	Satisfactory

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers know their subjects well.
- Insufficient work is set for the GCSE groups to allow them to make better than satisfactory progress.
- Some of the teaching allows students to be passive.

Commentary

Examination results

120. In 2002, results at A-level were well below average, but improved significantly in 2003. Numbers studying the subject to AS and A2 levels have been low in past years, though in 2003 the number of students starting AS is roughly double what has been normal. The number of students dropping out of either AS or A2 courses has been small.

Standards and achievement

121. Standards are higher in Year 13 than in Year 12 because the larger numbers of students in the Year 12 group include a higher proportion of students who are lower attainers.
122. Whilst in Year 12 students generally make only a limited contribution to class discussion; by the time they reach Year 13 most students are more willing to share their ideas with others. In doing so, they realise that they are increasing their own understanding and capacity to explain their point of view. In this aspect of the work, higher attainers are articulate and can use a sound technical vocabulary. However, the majority of students are middle and lower attainers, and they usually express themselves briefly, sometimes in too colloquial a way and often find difficulty in elaborating their ideas in response to questioning. These features are also found in students' written work. High attainers are able to produce well-structured, well-illustrated essays. The written work of lower attainers is often too short, the vocabulary lacks sophistication and there are too many errors of spelling, punctuation and grammar. Most students take an interest in social issues and how these are presented in literature. Although they complete set tasks conscientiously, the extent to which students pursue their own studies is variable. Most students obtain information from the Internet. However, only the higher

attaining students have developed their own taste in reading to the extent that might be expected.

Teaching and learning

123. Teachers possess and impart good subject knowledge, so students are given a deeper understanding of the literature and its social context and this, in turn, leads them on to speculate further about what they are studying. Thus, for example, when Year 13 students discovered that a Jacobean playwright stopped writing sub-plots for commercial reasons, it led them to look more critically at the value of such a plot in their own set text. When the purpose of the lesson is clearly defined and students are given the opportunity to be active in their own learning, for example by participating in well-structured group work, students start to generate their own ideas and their enthusiasm increases. Teaching is less effective when the teacher leads students through the work, provides them with ideas and interpretations and essentially maintains the same form of delivery throughout the lesson. In such circumstances, students become essentially passive, sometimes taking notes of indifferent quality. The quality of teachers' feedback on written work is generally good and helps students to understand what they need to do to improve.

Leadership and management

124. At the time of the inspection the head of faculty was absent. However, all the teachers involved worked closely as a team and the leadership and management of the subject were satisfactory.

GCSE courses for Year 12 students

125. A much larger proportion of post-16 students than is average for comprehensive schools follow a one-year course in English for students who wish to re-sit GCSE. In 2003 results were satisfactory. However, a large proportion of students who started the course did not complete it.

126. In the present Year 12 there are again a relatively large number of students following the course. Students' standards of attainment are well below those usually seen, but they are doing as well as expected given their standards on starting the course, as a result of satisfactory teaching.

Standards and achievement

127. Most students continue to improve their skills in speaking and listening, becoming increasingly more able to adapt what they say to meet the needs of the situation. Some students produce work of good quality, as was seen when students delivered monologues in which they were able to use the rhythm of the language, as well as the appropriate words, to create a particular mood. Students have a sound understanding of what they read and can often offer perceptive comments. Predominantly, however, their weakness is writing. Much of what they write is poorly expressed, ungrammatical and too simplistic to meet the needs of an academic course.

Teaching and learning

128. The most effective teaching is well planned, takes into account students' prior attainment and encourages students to use their own initiative. Most students work co-operatively and try to improve their standards, for example, by redrafting work when required to do so. However, students do not use ICT or dictionaries as might be expected. Teachers' expectations are inconsistent as to how much written work they set, mark and assess. In general, insufficient

work is set to enable students to improve their standards significantly beyond the level usually expected.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

129. Only a small group of students follow a course in key skills; these students are very low attainers who are not yet of a suitable level of attainment to study for GCSE courses. Most have significant difficulties with English. These students receive good teaching and support to improve their language skills to a level where they can study for GCSE in following years. Other students improve their communication skills satisfactorily through their work in other subjects.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **satisfactory**.

There are two main groups of students studying mathematics in the sixth form: those studying for A-level and those re-taking their GCSE. Both were a focus for the inspection.

The provision at A-level is **good**.

	Year 12	Year 13
Standards	Below average	Average
Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching and learning	Good	Good

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since previous inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers provide a good level of support for students.
- In all lessons, students freely participate in discussions. They respond well to questions and work collaboratively to volunteer suggestions and answers.
- Students making the transition between Years 11 and 12 sometimes find the styles of learning difficult to adjust to; as a consequence learning suffers.
- Schemes of work are not developed sufficiently.

Commentary

Examination results

130. There were too few candidates in 2002 to provide a statistical analysis of results. There are no national figures for comparisons for 2003 yet.

Standards and achievement

131. Students have a reasonable understanding of mathematics at AS and A2 level and make some use of past work when introduced to a new topic. In Year 12 at AS-level, students can quickly find composite and inverse functions and can differentiate at a basic level. However, they find algebra difficult due to their lack of exposure to this at GCSE level. In Year 13 students can use

calculus to evaluate exponential rates of decay. Overall, given their standards on starting the course, students are achieving well.

Teaching and learning

132. Teachers give good support when students ask for clarification, which allows students to improve their understanding. In lessons, students are encouraged to participate in discussions; they respond well to questions and volunteer suggestions in articulate ways. Good diagnostic comments are made when marking students' work; they show the students where they have made mistakes and what they need to do to improve. Lessons are well planned and structured. They proceed at a brisk pace and allow students to consolidate each stage of new learning before progressing to the next stage. However, insufficient opportunities are provided for students to work on their own initiative and to prepare for topics in advance. In discussion with students it became clear that making the transition between Years 11 and 12 was something that some had found difficult. This was mainly due to the different teaching and learning styles used.

Leadership and management

133. Teachers in the department work well together and there are good procedures for assessing the students' performance as they progress through the sixth form. There are programmes of study that follow the published syllabuses. However, the schemes of work lack guidance on the appropriate teaching methods and resources to be used.

GCSE courses for Year 12 students

Overall the provision in GCSE mathematics in Year 12 is **satisfactory**. However, there are **unsatisfactory elements** such as the provision for those students who study re-sit mathematics as part of their GNVQ studies. Large numbers of students follow a GCSE course to try to improve their grades from Year 11.

The following groups of students study mathematics to GCSE level:

- Those who wish to improve their grades from D to C.
- Those who wish to improve their grades but are very unlikely to achieve a grade C.
- Those who are studying mathematics because this is time-tabled automatically alongside the main GNVQ subject they are studying.

The challenges in providing for this diverse group of students are:

- Students have been used to a modular course, the majority at foundation level. Presently, only intermediate level is offered, which is a completely different type of course from the foundation level. This is a culture change, difficult for most students to get used to.
- Some lessons are missed by students due to time-table clashes.
- Some students are taking their re-sits for a second time.

The curriculum is unsatisfactory as a relatively large proportion of students are on a course in which they stand little chance of success.

Standards and achievement

134. Overall, in 2002 the students entered Year 12 with very low standards. The standards attained at the end of Year 12 were also very low. This was further illustrated in 2003 when six students gained one grade higher, 14 stayed at the same grade and six gained a lower grade.

Most students did as well as expected, but would have been better off studying for subjects where they would have more chance of success.

Teaching and learning

135. Teaching and learning are good. Lessons are planned well to use a variety of different approaches. Nevertheless, some students do not want to be on the course and others cannot attend all their lessons, so their achievement is reduced.

Mathematics across the curriculum

136. Only a small group of students follow a course in key skills; these students are very low attainers who are not yet of a suitable level of attainment to study for GCSE courses. These students receive good teaching and improve their mathematics to a level where they are able to study for a GCSE in subsequent years. Other students have sufficient mathematical work built into the lessons in the other subjects that they study.

SCIENCE

The focus for this report was on chemistry, but biology and physics A-level courses were sampled. Numbers for biology are good; the subject is well organised and students have achieved well. Numbers for physics are low but the students' achievement over the past three years has been satisfactory.

The school also provides a one-year course in single science GCSE for those who failed to gain a C grade in double award science in Year 11. This course is not successful, with most of the students failing to improve on the GCSE grades they achieved at the end of Year 11.

Chemistry

Provision in chemistry is **satisfactory**.

	Year 12	Year 13
Standards	Below average	Below average
Achievement	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Teaching and learning	Satisfactory	Satisfactory

Leadership	Unsatisfactory
Management	Satisfactory
Progress since previous inspection	Satisfactory

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Lessons are well planned and students are clear about the learning objectives.
- Students do not have clear targets and are not therefore aware of their true potential.
- No one has responsibility for the development of the subject.

Commentary

Examination results, standards and achievement

137. From 2000 to 2002 there was a decline both in the number of students taking chemistry A-level and insufficient candidates to provide a worthwhile analysis of results. In 2003 there were no entries for the A2 level examination, but the results of those entering the AS-level have meant

that there is a group of seven students likely to be entered in 2004 and numbers following the AS course are encouraging. However, the attainment of students commencing the course has been well below average and achievement has been at least satisfactory.

Teaching and learning

138. Lessons are well prepared and this was well illustrated in a lesson on molecular structure where good preparation and planning ensured that students were given a variety of visual aids to help the understanding of a difficult topic. Students work hard and concentrate well in the theory lessons, although pace is lost on some occasions. Lessons are, however, sometimes too focused around the teacher and the students are insufficiently stimulated to have a greater and more active involvement. The good relationship between students and teachers ensures a positive and pleasant working environment. Students' work is marked carefully with helpful comments but there is no clear system for giving suitable and realistic targets to the students. A system of informal but guided self-assessment is used in some areas but this, although helpful, is not standardised and integral to the support system. Students are not challenged enough in some of the topics and there is an emphasis in following the basic requirements of the syllabus. For example, in the lesson on molecular structures an opportunity was missed to broaden the discussion to interest and further challenge the students.

Leadership and management

139. Accommodation overall is satisfactory but there is a lack of fume cupboards, which severely limits some of the work that can be carried out, and ICT resources are not readily accessible. The leadership of the department is unsatisfactory as there is no teacher with a specific responsibility for the A-level course. This is hindering the development of the subject and makes co-operation between the teachers more difficult.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

The focus for the inspection was information and communication technology.

Provision in information and communication technology is **good**.

	Year 12	Year 13
Standards	Below average	Below average
Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching and learning	Good	Good

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since previous inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students following the GNVQ ICT course achieve very well because of the very good teaching.
- Students' achievement is good overall because of the good teaching.
- Teachers and students are supported well by the good resources.
- There is no core ICT programme for students and as a result their ICT skills do not improve.
- Too many students start courses without the appropriate pre-requisite qualifications in ICT and as a result some drop out of their courses.

Commentary

Examination results

140. Results in the GNVQ examinations in 2002 were average. Results were below average in the A-level and AS-level examinations. Results were also below average at GCSE level. Results in 2003 followed a similar pattern although results at A-level dipped slightly. Results at GCSE level were poor.

Standards and achievement

141. Many of the students start courses with minimal qualifications in ICT. Students achieve well given their starting points. Students following the A-level course have a below average knowledge of relational databases. Higher attainers use correct conventions and have basic understanding of filters and macros. The standards on the AVCE course are below average. Students have a basic knowledge of programming using visual basic. Students studying for GNVQ have a sound knowledge of presentation software and use this effectively to demonstrate their ideas for a database. Students on the key skills programme have a limited understanding of ICT systems and applications. All these different groups of students achieve at least well given that almost all of them have not studied the subject to examination level before joining the sixth form.

Teaching and learning

142. There are two aspects that stand out in the teaching that explain why students achieve well. Firstly, the quality of assessment, particularly on the GNVQ course, is very good. Teachers provide detailed lists of what students need to do in order to improve their work and put aside time for students to take the necessary actions. Students are very appreciative of the comments. The second element is the good knowledge of the subject that teachers possess. At all levels, teachers know how to get students to focus on examination criteria and identify how students can improve. Resources produced by the head of department and his team are effective at supporting students at all levels. For example, a very good worksheet about programming 'Functions' was used with a group of AVCE students, which resulted in them achieving very well within the lesson. However, some lessons are not as successful when the computer network malfunctions and the teacher spends time sorting out the problems.

Leadership and management

143. The introduction of new courses has improved the school's provision considerably. Staff are supported well and the planning of the new courses has been innovative; they meet the needs of students well.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

144. Not all students follow a course of study in ICT, which restricts the development of their ICT skills. However, students have satisfactory access to computers to support their study. Many students regularly use computers outside of lessons.

HUMANITIES

The inspection focused on history, law, psychology, religious education and sociology.

History

Provision in history is **good**.

	Year 12	Year 13
Standards	Average	Average
Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching and learning	Good	Not applicable

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since previous inspection	Good

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching produces challenging lessons that move at pace and lead to good achievement.
- Analysing students' previous examination performance data and the setting of realistic targets for students' achievements are rigorous.
- Teaching of literacy skills is not sufficiently focused on students' needs.

Commentary

Examination results

145. Results in the 2002 A-level examinations were average, but fell in 2003.

Standards and achievement

146. This year there is a class in Year 12 only, so there will be entries in 2004 at AS-level and not at A-level. Students in Year 12 quickly adjust to the greater demands of AS-level and produce work that is in line with national averages, which is a good level of achievement given their GCSE grades. The great majority produce writing that analyses source evidence critically, evaluates different views and provides supporting evidence for views expressed. This is evident in work on the reasons for popular unrest in Russia under the Tsars, and the movement to reform the electoral system in pre-1832 England.

Teaching and learning

147. Students benefit from knowledgeable and enthusiastic teaching. Teachers plan lessons that challenge and stimulate their students. As a result, students learn well and achieve well. For example, in one lesson students learned a great deal about how recent research by eminent historians has clarified Lenin's ruthlessness as a revolutionary leader. In another lesson, detailed study of a Cruickshank cartoon helped students develop their analytical skills through discussion of the power of irony to expose the corruption of the electoral system prior to 1832. Teachers are well versed in the requirements of examinations and their assessment of written assignments is accurate and the marking is detailed and thorough. The monitoring of student achievement and progress, through frequent assessment and student target setting, is rigorous. Students' attitudes towards the subject are very positive and they enjoy the lessons. The one area that lags behind the rest of the teaching is in the development of students' literacy skills, where not enough is being done to improve standards of writing in particular.

Leadership and management

148. The subject is managed well and clear vision and direction are provided. An annual evaluation of students' performance in examinations is carried out and this feeds directly into teaching plans. The policy for further strengthening students' literacy skills is not sufficiently clear about the specific strategies that teachers must employ in their lessons and marking of work. The improvement in examination results means that good progress has been made since the previous inspection.

Law

Provision in law is **satisfactory**.

	Year 12	Year 13
Standards	Below average	Below average
Achievement	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Teaching	Good	Good
Learning	Satisfactory	Satisfactory

Leadership	Satisfactory
Management	Satisfactory
Progress since previous inspection	Not applicable

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good lesson preparation and class management give students good opportunities to learn.
- Lack of writing skills in Years 12 and 13 hinders learning and the quality of students' work.
- Students on the GCSE course do not have the necessary qualifications to ensure success.

Commentary

Examination results, standards, and achievement

149. There were too few candidates for law in 2002 or 2003 to provide a statistical analysis of results at A-level. Results in GCSE law in 2003 were very poor. Given their GCSE grades on starting the various courses, students are doing as well as expected. Nevertheless, those studying for GCSE have such poor grades at GCSE from Year 11 that few stand any chance of obtaining a grade in Year 12.

Teaching and learning

150. Teaching is good and learning is satisfactory. The difference is due to weak writing skills essential to the study of law. Many students start the courses with relatively poor results in English at GCSE, which severely diminishes their opportunities for learning in a subject that relies so heavily on writing. Lessons are thoroughly planned and prepared. The best teaching involves students in a variety of learning activities. For example, in a lesson on negligence, students compiled case studies, annotating cases and decisions and making clear notes for revision. The teacher explained clearly the tort of negligence quoting Donoghue and Stevenson, giving Lord Atkin's dictum. The lesson was planned in detail to ensure a rapid pace of learning. The teacher's expertise and insistence on the use of correct legal language enabled students to accurately apply their knowledge and understanding to other areas of law. Most students are enthusiastic in their approach to lessons and participate well in discussion. However, weak writing skills mean comprehension is poor; inappropriate language is often used. Assessment is good and homework is used to reinforce and extend students' knowledge. Computers are an underused resource to analyse legal issues and case law.

Psychology

Provision in psychology is **good**.

	Year 12	Year 13
Standards	Below average	Below average
Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching and learning	Good	Good

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since previous inspection	Not applicable

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Resources are imaginative and exciting.
- The teacher has a good knowledge of the subject and his enthusiasm is infectious.
- Students' writing skills prevent some explanation, ideas and arguments being presented in a coherent form.

- The use of ICT for teaching and for learning is unsatisfactory.

Commentary

Examination results

151. In 2002, A-level results were below average; results declined in 2003. Results fluctuate according to differences in the standards of students starting the course.

Standards and achievement

152. In the classes, there is a wide range of standards. Most students are achieving well relative to their GCSE results when they started the course. Students make good progress as a result of good teaching. Students' understanding of the topics covered is generally average or above, but their writing skills are well below average, which reduces their standard of written work, particularly when they have to explain concepts that they have learnt.

Teaching and learning

153. The teacher has a good command of the subject and uses questions well to probe students' understanding. Lessons are planned well to include a variety of effective teaching methods, but not enough is being done to improve students' independent learning skills, such as using ICT for research. The teacher gives full rein to his enthusiasm for his own specialism, which powerfully increases students' motivation and interest. In a Year 12 class on emotional development students examined various theories. The teacher communicated the excitement of the various scientific psychologists and of the debate about what constitutes negative and affirmative views on emotional development. To develop students' curiosity the teacher recommended further reading available in the school library.

Leadership and management

154. Psychology is well led. Imaginative and exciting notes and schemes of work provide students with useful support covering the entire course. The enrichment of the subject is good; there are many research studies for students to pursue such as behaviour, social and cultural factors. These activities extend students' applied knowledge of psychology; students are rightly appreciative of these experiences.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **satisfactory**.

	Year 12	Year 13
Standards	Below average	Below average
Achievement	Satisfactory	Good
Teaching and learning	Satisfactory	Good

Leadership	Satisfactory
Management	Satisfactory
Progress since previous inspection	Not applicable

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good knowledge of the subject enables teachers to give clear guidance to students.
- The study of Islam enables students to draw on their own experiences.
- Students in Year 12 are too dependent on their teachers.

- Students are not yet involved in the assessment of their work and so are not clear about how they may improve.

Commentary

Examination results

155. The first cohort of students sits the A-level examination in 2004. Thirteen students sat the AS examination for the first time in 2003 and results indicate that they did well.

Standards and achievement

156. Standards on the A-level course are just below average; students achieve higher levels in their oral work than their written work. Students in Year 13 study Islam and ethics. This enables them to build on their own experiences and develop their areas of interest. They are developing a sound grasp of the different faith groups of Islam. In oral work they display a greater depth of understanding than in their written work, as was observed in a thoughtful discussion about the compatibility of weapons of mass destruction with an Islamic or Christian state. In their coursework they demonstrate good research skills and a well-balanced account in their chosen topic. Lower attaining students fail to identify the key point of the title and do not analyse the relevant material gathered. Achievement is good in Year 13 where students are well motivated and keen to be active in their learning. Standards on the AS-level course are below average. In Year 12 students are too willing to rely on their teacher to provide their information in easily structured worksheets, and fail to challenge their own understanding through their own efforts.

Teaching and learning

157. Teachers have a secure knowledge of their subject and are able to respond to students' questions clearly and with confidence. As a consequence, the relationship between students in Year 13 and their teachers is one of partnership in their learning. Teachers treat the faith studied with respect and this encourages students to develop similar respect for other faiths. Teachers encourage them to undertake independent research and to investigate areas that interest them. Because students want to succeed and are interested in extending their knowledge of ethics and Islam, they are willing to question their teachers and to learn from each other. In Year 12, the students are much more passive, and teachers tend to give in to this by providing worksheets, rather than telling them to work things out for themselves. Students in both years are not yet involved in the assessment of their work and so are not clear about how they may improve.

Leadership and management

158. Two new courses have been introduced successfully. These courses are well organised. New resources have been chosen well and the organisation of the coursework component is enabling students to achieve well.

159. Students who are not following the A-level course do not receive their statutory right to a religious education in the sixth form.

Sociology

Provision in sociology is **good**.

	Year 12	Year 13
Standards	Average	Below average
Achievement	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Teaching and learning	Good	Good

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since previous inspection	Not applicable

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The range of teaching methods used enables the needs of all students to be met.
- Teaching methods are well selected and time in lessons is used very productively.
- More able students need to be more effectively challenged in order to achieve at the higher grades of A and B.
- Students' poor writing skills mean that they find it difficult to explain themselves in writing.

Commentary

Examination results

160. Results at A-level were below average in 2002 and fell in 2003.

Standards and achievement

161. Standards in the department have been rising since a change in staffing two years ago. Results are below average because of a lack of the higher A or B grades. Nevertheless, students do as well as expected given their standards on starting the course. In Year 12, students demonstrate a secure understanding of key sociological terms and concepts and are starting to apply their theory to real situations. In Year 13, students demonstrate an understanding of the methodology of the subject, including the strengths and limitations of particular research techniques. They can draw concepts and theories from different sociological traditions. This was particularly evident in a lesson about the sociology of religion when students' discussions about evil forces and the after life clearly demonstrated proficient oracy skills. However, students' limited literacy skills impact on standards as students find it difficult to conceptualise, analyse and evaluate.

Teaching and learning

162. Students in Years 12 and 13 benefit from good teaching by a teacher who has very good knowledge of the subject. Lesson objectives are always clear. The range of teaching activities employed allows the teacher to meet differing individual needs and enables students to learn effectively. The teacher is highly sensitive to students' individual needs. His manner and approach encourage students to express their opinions without fear of ridicule. When class discussions take place, they are skilfully led in order to ensure that all contributions are encouraged and valued. Students' attitudes towards the subject are positive and they enjoy their work. More able students, however, do not get enough extension activities in order to be able to

achieve the A or B grades at both AS and A2. Whilst this good teaching brings about good learning in lessons, students' achievement is only satisfactory because they find it hard to express themselves in writing.

Leadership and management

163. Procedures are clear and the teacher is committed to improving standards. The department is committed to inclusion and the promotion of equality, and has concern for the needs of individuals.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS AND MEDIA

The inspection focused on art.

Art

Provision in art is **satisfactory**.

A small number of students study art at AS and A-level, while several study to GCSE level.

	Year 12	Year 13
Standards	Average	Average
Achievement	Satisfactory	Satisfactory
Teaching and learning	Good	Good

Leadership	Satisfactory
Management	Unsatisfactory
Progress since the previous inspection	Satisfactory

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers have good knowledge and expertise.
- There are very good standards in pottery and clay modelling.
- The A2, AS and all GCSE courses are all time-tabled together and this limits the teachers' time with each group.
- GCSE students in particular cannot attend all lessons and underachieve as a result.

Commentary

Examination results

164. There were too few candidates in 2002 to provide a statistical analysis of results at A-level. There are no national figures against which to compare the 2003 results. Results at GCSE were low in 2003.

Standards and achievement

165. Standards at AS and A-level are average and students are achieving well in relation to their standards on starting the course. Students in Year 13 have carried out good research and can analyse their experiments to find ways to do interesting developments. Drawing from observation is of a high standard in Year 12. Work in clay and other three-dimensional sculpture is particularly good in both AS and A-level. Students are inspired by the high quality

of artists' work made available for guidance. Surface texture and pattern are exquisite in some cases.

166. There is open entry to GCSE; any student is allowed to take the subject. Even though students do well, given their standards on entry to the courses, in the limited time available, students are not being allowed to do as well as they could because of the poor curriculum planning. Some students re-sit the examination to get a higher grade. Others take the two-year course for the first time and take the examination after two terms. Many of these students underestimate the amount of time and independent study needed to complete the coursework. Some students in Year 12 begin art late when they discontinue other subjects. As the art examination begins towards the end of the second term they have insufficient time to do adequate coursework.

Teaching and learning

167. The teachers have good knowledge and expertise and guide students to do creative and imaginative work. There are good links with visiting artists that give students a wider vision and help to raise their standards. However, all the courses are taught together in mixed groups of A2, AS and different GCSE disciplines. Students attend the lessons when they are free to do so and the groups are seldom the same. This means that the teacher has to divide the time between the different groups. This arrangement makes for inefficient use of the teacher's time. It also means that students do not gain the usual benefits from working in the same groups and sharing ideas and research. Therefore, despite good teaching, students' achievement is only satisfactory, on the AS and A-level courses and students on the GCSE course underachieve because they do not get enough lessons or support.

Leadership and management

168. There is a good vision for developing opportunities for students, and the teachers work well together as a team. There are impressive displays of students' best work to encourage and inspire others. However, the management of the curriculum at a senior level is particularly weak, and is leading to students failing to achieve their potential on the GCSE course.

BUSINESS

Business education

The school has a wide range of traditional and vocational courses for students. These include GCE AS and A-level, VCE double award, and GNVQ Intermediate level.

The provision in business education is **good**.

	Year 12	Year 13
Standards	Average	Average
Achievement	Good	Good
Teaching and learning	Good	Good

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since previous inspection	Not applicable

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching results in students achieving well.
- The leadership and management are good and lead to good planning of courses.
- The good range of business links for vocational students is not extended to GCE students.

Commentary

Examination results

169. Results in the 2002 GCE A-level examination were well above average and maintained the high achievement of the previous year. The results in 2003, however, show a decline from earlier results. The GNVQ results in 2002 were in line with the national average but the 2003 results were below those achieved in recent years. Results in the 2002 VCE double award examination were below average but improved in 2003.

Standards and achievement

170. By the end of Year 13, A-level students have knowledge of a wide range of business terms and apply them in context. They understand how profit and loss accounts and balance sheets are drawn up and use business simulations to interpret how well a business is doing. Knowledge of local business enterprise is not well developed. Assignments are detailed and ICT is used well to prepare spreadsheets and present work. In VCE, students know about interest rates but understanding is weak on how rate changes affect the national economy. Class discussion is generalised and reasoning is weak. They know about the EU structure and use terms such as 'economies of scale' in context but do not make enough use of examples in explanations. GNVQ students understand about the marketing of products and use examples well to develop answers for group presentations. Oral work is good, but several students are weak in expressing themselves clearly in written work.

Teaching and learning.

171. Teachers are well qualified; they know the course requirements and make high demands on students in effort and application to their studies. Students respond positively to challenges, concentrate and achieve very well as a result. In a GNVQ lesson on 'break even' points for motor vehicle sales for example, students made rapid progress in learning business terms and plotting data because the teacher carefully planned and supported the completion of challenging tasks so that they concentrated fully and made substantial gains. Teachers manage students very well and it leads to them developing self-confidence and a wish to succeed. Occasionally learning is not effective because not enough is expected of them, with the result that students are passive and do not make enough progress.

Leadership and management

172. The subject is ably led and there are clear lines of communication so that teachers know about the expected standards. The schemes of work are sound but do not give enough guidance about teaching of literacy and use of resources. There are good systems to track progress and students are engaged in dialogue about how well they are achieving. Students on the vocational courses benefit from a good range of links with business, but these are not available to other students.

HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

Health and social care

Provision in health and social care is **very good**.

	Year 12	Year 13
Standards	Above average	Not applicable
Achievement	Very good	Not applicable
Teaching and learning	Very good	Not applicable

Leadership	Good
Management	Good
Progress since previous inspection	Not applicable

Main strengths and weaknesses

- As a result of very good teaching students achieve very well in relation to their prior attainment.
- Teachers know students well and use this knowledge to encourage and engage students.
- Teachers are very sensitive to students' individual needs.
- The staffing structure of the subject has historically lacked consistency.
- Links with residential and day-care centres are not good enough

Commentary

Examination results

173. Results were above average in 2002, which continued an improving trend. In 2003 all students passed and there were two merits.

Standards and achievement

174. Students consistently work at or near their capacity. They progress at a very good rate in relation to their earlier attainment; some make remarkable progress. Students with very low or no GCSE results pass the course and gain merits. Year 12 students are already demonstrating a competent understanding of health and social care services. They are beginning to have a clear understanding of how the principles of human behaviour are acquired and they use technical terminology correctly. This was particularly evident in a lesson where they had to identify the positive and negative effects of stressful life events. As yet, the department has not had students achieve distinctions. This is because to meet the higher level criteria students need to develop their analytical and evaluative skills. Many students have difficulty in analysing the results of their research because of limited literacy skills.

Teaching and learning

175. Students make considerably better progress than might be expected of them, because of very good teaching. Teaching is stimulating, consistently challenging and highly sensitive to students' individual needs. Staff have excellent relationships with their students and they develop students' confidence. Teachers lead discussions skilfully and ensure that all students' contributions are encouraged and valued. They also question effectively to check understanding. Teachers use an efficient blend of teaching methods, which encourage and engage all. Students understand the criteria that teachers use to assess their work and tutors help students with coursework requirements as the course progresses. Checklists for each of the portfolio assessments are given to students to break down the criteria into manageable tasks.

Leadership and management

176. The department benefits from a head of department who has a sense of purpose and high aspirations for the subject. She is committed to inclusion and has an appropriate concern for the needs of individual students. There is a uniformity of systems and good practice within the department. The department is well supported by the local community and developing use is being made of visiting speakers. Whilst there are good links with the local Health and Community Centres, Day Nurseries and the Settlement Organisation, links with residential and day-care centres for the elderly have yet to be developed.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Sixth form grade</i>	<i>School grade</i>
The overall effectiveness of the sixth form and the school	4	4
How inclusive the school is		3
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	4	3
Cost effectiveness of the sixth form / value for money provided by the school	4	5
Overall standards achieved		4
Students' achievement	4	4
Students' attitudes, values and other personal qualities		3
Attendance	4	4
Attitudes	3	3
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	2	3
Students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development		3
The quality of education provided by the school		4
The quality of teaching	4	4
How well students learn	4	4
The quality of assessment	4	4
How well the curriculum meets students' needs	5	5
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities		4
Accommodation and resources	4	4
Students' care, welfare, health and safety		3
Support, advice and guidance for students	5	3
How well the school seeks and acts on students' views	4	4
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents		5
The quality of the school's links with the community	4	5
The school's links with other schools and colleges	3	4
The leadership and management of the school		4
The governance of the school	5	5
The leadership of the headteacher		3
The leadership of other key staff	5	4
The effectiveness of management	4	4

Inspectors make judgements on a scale: excellent (grade 1); very good (2); good (3); satisfactory (4); unsatisfactory (5); poor (6); very poor (7).